

**ROBERT MARTIN'S LESSON.**



ROBERT MARTIN'S LESSON.

*Frontispiece.*

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# ROBERT MARTIN'S LESSON.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "ALDERNYDE," "A DIVIDED HOUSE," "CARLOWRIE,"  
ETC., ETC.

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*NEW EDITION.*

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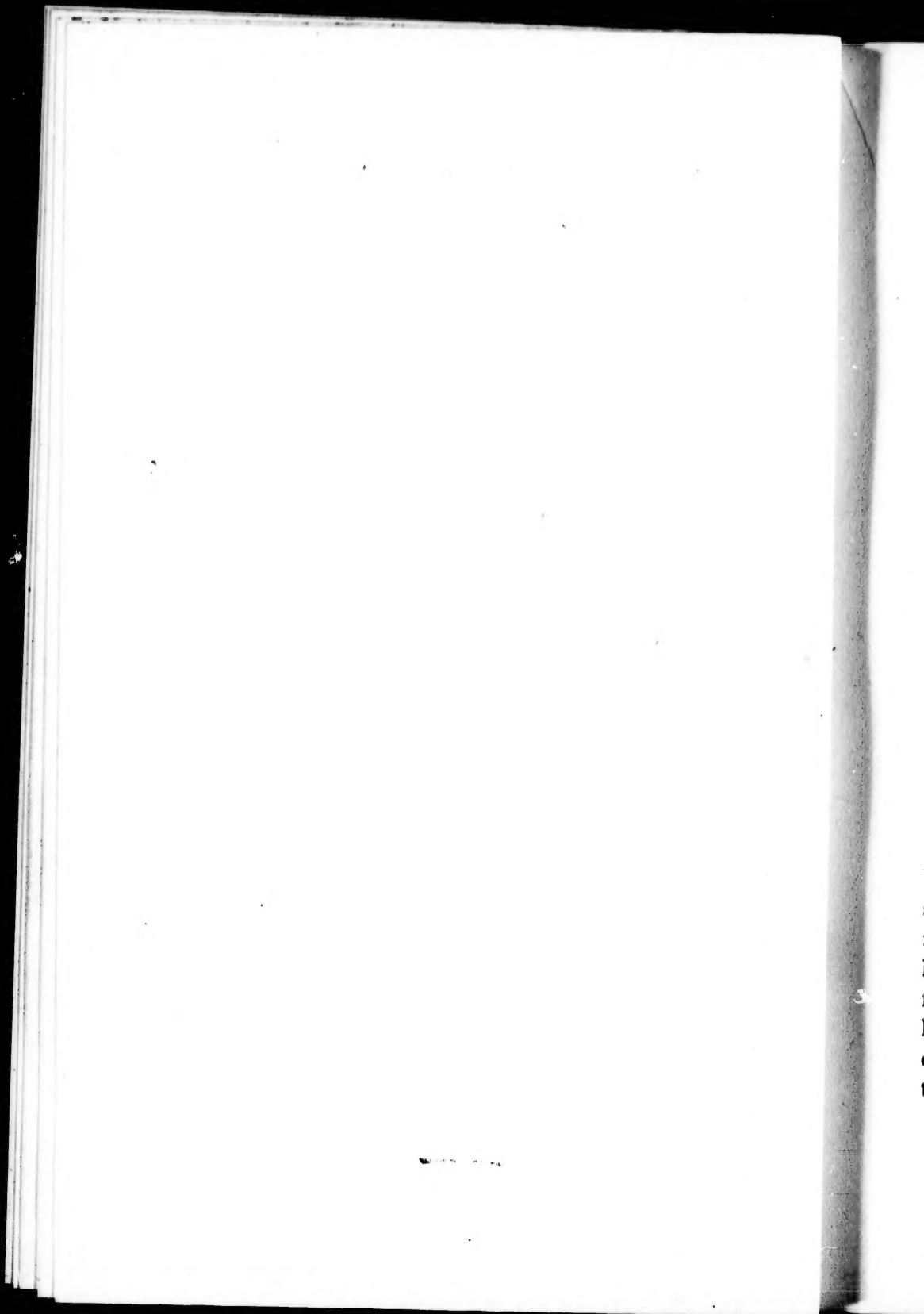
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the year  
BRIGGS,  
House,





## ROBERT MARTIN'S LESSON.



### CHAPTER I.

#### PROSPECTS.

**O**N a somewhat boisterous evening in March, 1871, two gentlemen were sitting together in the comfortable dining-room of a substantial Glasgow mansion. That it was the abode of wealth was evidenced by the handsome and expensive appointments of the room, while the taste of the inmates found expression in the few beautiful and rare ornaments, and in the choice studies in art to be seen on the walls. The gentlemen had their chairs drawn close up to the tiled hearth, and the ruddy glow from the cheerful fire fell full upon their faces. The elder of the two was leaning back in his chair with his elbows resting on the arms, and the tips of his fingers meeting together, while his face wore a thoughtful and

attentive expression as he listened to his companion's remarks. It was a good face, kindly and benevolent in its expression; and if the eyes had a certain keen, shrewd, far-seeing gleam in them, perhaps that was but the outcome of the long period in which he had been ceaselessly involved in the cares of business. Gilbert Matheson was a self-made man. He had not, indeed, like the proverbial self-made man, entered the city bare-footed and without a penny in his pocket, but he had risen from humble, though respectable and comfortable obscurity, and by his own efforts, his good business capacity and his indomitable perseverance, had made a substantial fortune. He was proud of his success in a quiet way, and liked to have evidences of it about him in his house, and in his person also. He was faultlessly attired in evening dress, with diamond studs and solitaires, and a heavy but chaste gold chain looked well against the shining broadcloth. There was nothing vulgar about Gilbert Matheson; he was indeed more of a gentleman by nature and action than many who lay much greater claim to the title. His companion was a much younger man, and a clergyman, as was evidenced by his ministerial garb. He was singularly handsome, almost striking indeed in his appearance. The tall commanding figure, the noble head, with its masses of curling brown hair, the fine face, with the firm yet mobile mouth, and

the earnest speaking eye made the outward man a pleasant study ; of the inner man perhaps we may learn a little in these pages. He seemed deeply interested in the subject under discussion, for he sat forward in his chair, and one firm white hand, emblem of beauty and strength, was uplifted as if to enforce his words. It was the right hand, and on the little finger there gleamed a diamond ring which flashed in Gilbert Matheson's eye with every movement. The mere wearing of a finger-ring cannot, of course, be regarded as a sign of weakness in any man, but when coupled with many other little niceties and conceits it might lead an impartial observer to conclude that Robert Martin was very sensible of his fine face and figure, and that he further considered it right and proper to enhance these so far as lay in his power.

"Yes, the congregation in Wellogate Church has fallen away most deplorably, and yet Hightown itself is increasing in population annually at the rate of two and three hundreds," he was saying. "I cannot think why the late minister did not add considerable numbers to the roll of his communicants. He had a splendid field in which to work."

"Ah, wasn't he an old man?" inquired Mr. Matheson.

"Yes, and thoroughly of the old school. They have neither organ nor choir, but an antiquated precentor who bawls out the slow old tunes at the

pitch of his voice," replied the minister. "That Sunday I preached I could scarcely believe that I was in the parish church of a rising and populous town in the nineteenth century."

"Isn't there a manufacturing element in Hightown?" asked Mr. Matheson in the same quiet and apparently indifferent manner.

"Yes, there are two wool mills, an extensive paper-making concern, and several spinning mills. In spite of dull times there is plenty of money in Hightown, and I am told quite a cotton aristocracy," responded the minister. "But several of the wealthiest families who belonged originally to the Established Church have drifted away to the Episcopalians, driven to the step I doubt not by the barren and dreary services in their own church. I do not despair of being able to win them back again. I assure you I shall very speedily alter the existing state of things in the Wellogate parish."

"Um ; is Wellogate the only Established church in Hightown?"

"No, there are two *quoad sacras*."

"And are the ministers of these two churches of the same type as the late minister of the Wellogate parish?"

- "I really can't say, Mr. Matheson. Remember I was not forty-eight hours in Hightown."

"Did you say the call to you was unanimous?"

"Nearly so. Of course there are always a few dissenting voices in a congregation. There was one influential man who voted against me I believe, and strenuously opposed my election on the ground that an assistant in a fashionable city church, as he termed it, was not the man for a congregation like Wellogate, which is principally composed of working people."

"I am not sure but that the man was right, Robert," said Mr. Matheson. "What was his name?"

"A Mr. Buchanan. But tell me on what grounds you would say I was unfit for a parish like Wellogate."

"I did not say you were unfit, Robert. But certainly your three years in St. Mungo's, where you have been courted and caressed much more than was good for you, has not been a very good preparation for the laborious life of a parish minister in a place like Hightown. What do you know of working people and their needs?"

Robert Martin reddened a little at the merchant's plain, blunt question.

"You give me credit for a very meagre amount of knowledge, surely," he said. "I admit that I am ignorant of many things; but surely if I am willing and anxious to learn I shall do well in my new sphere."

"Certainly, if you set about it in the right way,"



said the merchant. "Then you have quite decided to accept the call?"

"Quite; but I should like your approval. It is a good stipend, and may be increased; and there is a fairly habitable manse. Ada seems to think I ought to accept it."

"Ada is a foolish lassie who thinks everything you do perfection," said Mr. Matheson dryly, and yet with a deep and peculiar tenderness of look and tone which betrayed that the mention of his daughter's name touched a very precious chord in his heart.

Robert Martin sat back in his chair and relapsed into silence. He felt a little aggrieved, and fancied his future father-in-law needlessly hard upon him. Mr. Matheson's keen eye at once divined that unspoken thought, and a slight smile touched his lips.

"I suppose, then, that you have no intention of going to Hightown without Ada," he said after a little pause. "You will be desirous that your marriage should not be long delayed."

"It certainly would be better, Mr. Matheson," replied Robert Martin; "but of course Ada and I are in the hands of yourself and Mrs. Matheson. If you would prefer that I should serve a year's probation at Hightown before you intrust your daughter to my keeping, I can but bow to your decision."

"You are vexed with me, lad," said the merchant, sitting forward and looking the young man straight in the face. "I am sorry if I appeared indifferent, or if I unwittingly cast a damper on your ardent hopes for your new life. You ought to know me well enough, Robert, to be sure that I am as deeply and unselfishly interested in you as if you were my own son. If I do not appear to share your glowing visions for your future at Hightown it is only because, having lived longer and seen more than you, I foresee difficulties and dangers which, unless you are extremely careful to shun, will mar your usefulness and shadow your happiness. In spite of its many advantages, I fear Wellogate church is not the place for you."

"The very difficulties and dangers you allude to, the very idea of being able to kindle a little life in that dead church, and of showing them that culture and labour can very well go hand in hand, make me eager to go," said Robert Martin enthusiastically.

"Your theory is good, but it will require a careful mind and a steady, prudent hand to enforce its practice," answered the merchant doubtfully. "You are impetuous, and, if you will excuse me being so plain with you, I fear a little headstrong also. You have had it all your own way in St. Mungo's, for the people were always ready to follow wherever you led the way. You have been

much loved and looked up to, I do not say undeservedly, but it will be different where you are going. At Wellogate you can readily imagine that every new departure will be coldly and critically weighed before it is sanctioned by your people, who will of necessity be prejudiced by long usage to the simplest and barest forms of worship."

Robert Martin sat silent, but not convinced.

"The first thing is to win the confidence of your flock," continued Mr. Matheson. "And to do that you must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with all the needs and necessities of their lives. I warn you it will be a very different thing to step into some house and be received, perhaps, on a washing day, in an untidy kitchen, by the weary mother of half-a-dozen bairns from being warmly welcomed in a fine drawing-room by the ladies of St. Mungo's. I hope you will be able to bridge the gulf, and make yourself at home with the working members of the church, otherwise you will not do much good in Hightown."

"I hope I shall never so far forget the duties and obligations of my office as to fall short in my visiting or in any other functions that will be required of me," said Robert Martin quickly.

"I hope not, my boy," said the merchant quietly.

"I would advise you to make a friend of that Mr. Buchanan, Robert. I think I know the man, and if I mistake not, he will prove himself your

best friend in Hightown if you will let him, in spite of his opposition to your election. Ah! there is the bell, that will be Ada and her mother. They have been at a Dorcas meeting and are wonderfully punctual."

Conversation was suspended until the ladies entered the room, as they often did, before proceeding upstairs. Mrs. Matheson came first, and gave Robert Martin a hearty greeting. She was a comely woman, perhaps neither very handsome nor ladylike in appearance, but she had a kind pleasant face, and a very motherly smile and manner which made her a great favourite with both old and young. She was richly but tastefully dressed, and looked a fit mate indeed for the opulent merchant. Behind her came Adelaide, or Ada as she was familiarly called, their only child, and the betrothed wife of the Rev. Robert Martin. They had been playmates in childhood, close companions in youth, and were soon to be husband and wife. People said it was a suitable match, for Robert Martin was well born and possessed substantial means to balance against Ada Matheson's handsome dowry. Even the most jealous-minded and fault-finding clique in St. Mungo's church had nothing to say against it, for they all loved the clever assistant, and even the most prejudiced could find no fault with the maiden of his choice. She was a very bright and winsome creature, not possessing per-

haps the highest type of form or loveliness, but the lissom girlish figure, the sweet, frank, unclouded face, the earnest winning eyes, and unstudied grace of manner and movement made her indeed "fair to see." Sunshine followed wherever she went, and yet she was not a giddy butterfly content to skim lightly and carelessly through life. She had true womanly thoughts and noble aspirations, and out of her love and faith in things divine sprang love and faith in things human, and with it an earnest desire to do good.

A flush, faint and exquisite as the rose-tint on a sea-shell, stole into her cheek at sight of her lover, and she shook hands without speaking a word. Then she moved to the table and stood there—a dainty and winsome figure in costly seal wraps—and began to unfasten the buttons of her gloves. While Mrs. Matheson was talking volubly, as was her wont, to the minister, the merchant's eyes dwelt with yearning fondness on his daughter's sweet face. *How* he loved her, how unutterably dear and precious she was to him, I cannot tell you. She was his one ewe lamb, his darling, upon whom all the treasures of his paternal love were poured without stint. It had been a grief of no ordinary kind for Gilbert Matheson to consent to give her up, even to the son of his old friend, one worthy of her in many ways; but because he saw it was for her happiness, he had yielded. But it

had never entered into his head that Robert Martin might take her away from Glasgow, and the prospect of their settlement in Hightown, nearly fifty miles distant, was not particularly pleasant.

After a few minutes' general talk, Ada slipped away upstairs. It was not long before the minister rose and followed, knowing very well he should find her in the drawing-room. And when he entered there, the momentary cloud which the merchant's plain words had brought to his brow melted away in the sunshine of his darling's smile.





## CHAPTER II.

### AIMS IN LIFE.

**W**ELL, Ada, our holiday is over, and our work begins in earnest the day after to-morrow. Does your heart fail you at the thought?"

A faint flush stole to young Mrs. Martin's face at her husband's question, and she slightly shook her head.

"Oh, no! I am not so much of a coward as that, Robert," she answered. "Only I feel a little timid. Everything will be so new, and there will be so much for me to do. I am so afraid I shall not be able to fill my place worthily."

"My darling, what nonsense! Why, these very eyes of yours would take the hardest heart by storm," said Robert Martin lightly. "Even the invincible Buchanan will fall down and worship you."

Again Ada Martin shook her head.

"It is you who are talking nonsense now," she

said quietly, and, turning her eyes seawards, she sat a little while in silence. Yes, their month's wanderings were over, the brief period of close and uninterrupted companionship, so sweet a preparation for the more prosaic work of life, had come to an end, and they were now on their way home. They had first spent a fortnight among the vines and olives of southern France, not seeking to journey far for sight-seeing, because they were sufficient each to the other, and they found it so sweet to be alone together that they cared for nought else. They had then travelled back to Scotland by slow and circuitous routes, which the orthodox tourist would regard with dismay, and they found themselves in the last days of their pilgrimage resting in a quiet nook on the southern coast within sight of the stormy waters which sweep the wild and rocky shores of Galloway. It was a fine mild September evening, and the hour was that mystic hovering 'twixt daylight and darkness, when the sunset tints have scarcely flown, and the shadows of the twilight are closing in. A weird and wondrous light from the young harvest moon lay on sea and land ; the wild waves were hushed into a gentle murmur on the little strip of sandy shore, though round the rugged headland came the sullen dash of the breakers which never know a gentler tone. The straggling little hamlet on its green slope with its white



cottages, and its golden-tinted harvest fields beyond, made a fine and striking background to the picture—one which many a student of the brush had loved to study.

Robert Martin and his wife were sitting in the shelter of a huge boulder which in some great storm had been separated from the parent cliff. She had only the soft folds of her white wrap about her head and shoulders, for they had only stolen down from the little inn on the slope for their evening peep at the sea. It made a fitting frame for the sweet, grave, yet happy face, which was surely the dearest face in the world to him who called its owner wife.

"Come, tell me what makes you so quiet, dear one," he said, laying a tender hand on the slender shoulder, and seeking to turn her face round to him.

"I don't know, Robert," she answered slowly; "I feel so weighted down by the thought of what lies before us. Do you *think* I will be able to do my duty in Hightown?"

But for the wistfulness with which she spoke, Robert Martin could have laughed at his wife's fears.

"Why distress yourself so, my love? If you are just your sweet self you will be and do all that is required. If you look so very serious, I shall begin to fear I had no right to ask you to share my lot."

"Oh don't say that, Robert!" she exclaimed

quickly. "It is not that, dear. Only, as your wife I shall have so many opportunities of doing good, for speaking a word for Christ. I pray I may have strength to meet all these opportunities. I would not pass one by willingly. Perhaps He will make them so plain to me that my work will be easier than I think."

Robert Martin was silent for a little, feeling rebuked, he could not tell why. But he was conscious of the great contrast his wife's humility presented to the callous assured confidence of *his* success. He had never uttered nor felt any doubts regarding it. In two days he was to begin his work as parish minister of Hightown, and the thought had never caused him a moment's uneasiness or anxiety. Better perhaps had something of his wife's finer spirit moved him.

"Let me tell you all I would like to be and to do, Robert," she said presently; and leaning her head on her hand, she continued in a low and very earnest voice, "I want first of all to be a true wife and helpmate to you, because Christian work must find its birth-place at home, else it can have little influence abroad: of that I became convinced long ago. I want to make your home, dear, a place where you will find rest for a weary mind as well as a weary body; and I want to make myself so much to you that you will find in me your best sympathiser and friend as well as your

loving wife. Do you think I *can* be all that to you, Robert?"

No need to record the husband's answer; but it satisfied her completely.

"And to your people I should like to be a true friend whom they can trust," she went on with a sob in her gentle voice. "I want to go in and out among them gently and humbly, seeking to share their joys and their sorrows, to befriend them in their need, and to teach them to love me. I think if I win their hearts first, I shall be better able to help any who may be struggling like myself in the upward way."

"My darling, what a woman you are! and how unspeakably blessed am I in your love!" exclaimed Robert Martin involuntarily.

She smiled a little, and turned her thoughtful eyes again upon the heaving sea.

"It is a very easy thing to draw a fine ideal, and to say all one would like to be and to do," she said, "but it is a very different thing to live up to it. Yet I believe it is a good thing to have a high ideal of life and duty, because in aspiring to reach it, one's nature *must* be elevated, and not lowered. Do you not agree with me?"

"Most assuredly. *Excelsior* should be the motto of every man and woman," answered Robert Martin. "Well, well, my darling, between us we will work miracles in Hightown yet."

"I wish you would not be so confident, dear," said Ada Martin gravely. "It would be wiser to expect less for one's own sake, because any disappointment which might follow would be more easily borne."

"You are too doubting, dearest. Unless you have confidence in yourself you can never achieve great things," said Robert Martin, still lightly. "I promise you that in a year's time there shall be sweeping changes wrought in the Wellogate church and parish in spite of our friend Buchanan."

"Why do you speak always so slightly of Mr. Buchanan, Robert? Papa says he is a very nice man, and the very soul of honour where business is concerned."

"He may be that, dearest, and yet prove himself a malcontent in the church. He seems to have very old-fashioned ideas, and a wonderful tenacity in holding to them. He had it all his own way with poor old Doctor Ainslie, who was too gentle to resist, even had he felt inclined."

Ada Martin did not speak for a moment. There was something she did not like in her husband's tone and manner when he spoke of the man who had strenuously opposed his election to Hightown, a lack of that charity which is love.

"Tell me all you hope to do in Hightown, Robert. I have been speaking of my duties

and cares. What of yours?" she asked at length.

"Well, my love, I hope and intend to renovate the musical service of the church, and I promise you it will one day compare favourably with our famed St. Mungo's singing. I think the power and place of music in public worship is not understood by Presbyterians as a rule. Then I see no reason why the congregation should not be doubled. When that is accomplished I shall set about laying plans for a new church to replace the barn-like edifice which has contented them so long. When I have managed to make everything smooth and straight for my successor I shall enter a city charge, and leave the place before the people have grown weary of me and my preaching. The mistake most ministers make is in remaining too long in one place."

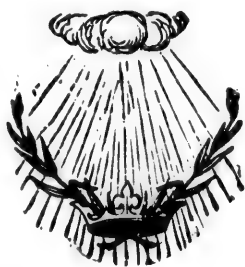
Ada Martin listened in silence; but the eyes turned upon the fast-darkening sea had now a shadow in their depths. She rose when he ceased speaking, and turning to him laid her hand, upon which gleamed both wedding and betrothal rings, lightly on his arm.

"There is one thing you have not mentioned, Robert," she said, and the beautiful eyes uplifted to his face filled with tears as she spoke. "You have forgotten the duty most sacred and binding on the conscience and heart of a Christian minister."

"And that, Ada? I love to take my lesson from your lips."

After a moment her answer came in an eager, trembling whisper, words which thrilled and rebuked him to the very heart—

"Winning souls to Christ."





### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FIRST SABBATH.

THE situation of the Wellogate church might have had something to do with the exodus of its wealthier members. It stood at the head of Market Street, which had once been the most important thoroughfare in Hightown. Market Street, which with its surrounding network of lanes and closes was included in the name "Wellogate," did not now possess a good reputation. It was indeed shunned by respectable people, because that portion of the population which was not considered respectable lived and moved and had its being there. In these dingy, dirty byways of the smoky town the public-house, with its twin-sister the pawnbroker's establishment, flourished as both ever do in the quarters of the poor. Brawls were common in the Wellogate, and the second edition of the *Hightown Gazette*, published twice a-week, had always a grievously long list of police cases to

report on Monday afternoon. Wellogate was indeed a large mission field, and the duties of the parish minister, if faithfully performed, could be no sinecure. The church was a square block of solid masonry, with a flat roof and long narrow windows fitted with panes of obscured glass, and an outer protection of iron bars. A dismal burying-ground heaped high with graves, and with no green beauty to relieve its sombre aspect, did not add to the outward attraction of the church in which Robert Martin was now to break the bread of life. The manse was little more than five hundred yards distant, a roomy comfortable old-fashioned family house, standing in a large garden enclosed by a stone wall high enough and perpendicular enough to defy the climbing genius of the Hightown arab. A locked gate, and an unscalable wall had hitherto protected the minister's fruit trees and currant bushes, as well as the flowers which, in spite of the smoky air, blossomed as abundantly as in the garden of any country manse.

It was late on the Saturday evening, the last of September, when Robert Martin and his wife arrived at their new home. It was pay Saturday in Hightown, and there was consequently a greater stir than usual in the Wellogate; nay more, there were unseemly sights and sounds which made Ada Martin tremble though her husband held her hand and the carriage windows were firmly shut.



"It was a mistake for us to delay our home-coming till to-night," he said, in a disturbed voice. "But don't let the usual Saturday night din of a busy town prejudice you against your new home, Ada."

"Oh no, I was not thinking of that," she answered quickly, but did not say what she was thinking. She would tell him by-and-by, but not yet. It was a little quieter in the wider thoroughfare beyond Market Street, and when they arrived at the gate of the manse the young wife drew a breath of relief. When they stepped into the garden and the great gate shut them in she felt as if they had reached a haven after a storm, so great was the contrast to the crowded streets through which they had passed. The wide low door was open, and a brilliant flood of light from the hall lamp shone out upon the darkness of the night. And on the threshold stood Gilbert Matheson and his wife waiting to welcome their children to their new home.

With a sob Robert Martin's wife sprang into her father's arms. She had never been parted from him so long before, and it was a great joy to be with him again.

Then her mother tearfully claimed her, and looked with yearning motherly eyes into the sweet, dear face on which smiles and tears now contended for the mastery. The emotion of the greetings

over, the young wife had time to look about the house which till now she had never seen but in imagination, and around which clustered so many bright and lovely hopes. It was a dwelling of which any young wife might have been proud, for no expense had been spared to make it beautiful for its mistress. The furnishings had been chosen in harmony with the quaint oak-panelled rooms, and being of the most costly description, thanks to Gilbert Matheson, the effect was very pleasing. Ada was delighted with everything, and expressed her delight in her usual frank impulsive way.

"So you have had a pleasant holiday, my darling; never felt the least qualm of home-sickness or pining for the old folk, eh!" said Gilbert Matheson as they sat down to supper.

"I will not say that, papa," Ada replied. "But it *was* a pleasant holiday, one which we will never forget."

"No, for it cannot be repeated," said the merchant a trifle gravely. "And now, come tell us what you saw. Your letters were rather disjointed and contained very meagre descriptions of your sight-seeing, and Robert's were not much better."

"I don't think we saw very much; did we, Robert?" asked the young wife innocently.

"Not much, beyond each other," the minister answered with a smile.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the merchant. "You are honest to confess it. You see, you wouldn't take my advice and go to some quiet nook. Honey-moon trips are the greatest folly. Mamma and I went to Paris and Vienna I remember. I tried to combine business with pleasure, for I had not been long in business at the time; but I don't think the experiment paid, eh, Mary?"

Mrs. Matheson laughed, and did not contradict her husband.

"I believe the time for married folks to take a trip is after they have been settled down at home for a while and are getting used to each other; but then, I'm just talking nonsense. Well, Robert, what heart have you for your hard work here? It *will* be hard work, and no mistake, with so many heathens at your very doors."

"I have a very good heart indeed. I am eager to begin," answered Robert Martin. "I feel that this is not quite the sphere for Ada; that is all."

"I am not so sure of that; but one thing I *am* sure of, that you would not do very well without her," replied Gilbert Matheson. "I hope and expect great things from you both."

"It is not a very nice place to have a house in," said Mrs. Matheson. "The only comfort is that it is so near the church, and really when the gates are shut you are quite secluded; and it is quite a pretty place in daylight too; and the house is so

convenient. Such cupboards and closets, Ada! I only wish our modern architects would study the housewife's comfort as thoroughly as their forefathers in the profession seem to have done."

"Oh, I am sure it is a delightful house, mamma, and I don't mind the situation a bit!" said Ada. "It will be so convenient for my visiting. I am so anxious to try and do some good among the poor people all about us."

"I hope Robert will take care of you, and not let you go prowling into all sorts of hovels, where you may catch all kinds of disease," said Mrs. Matheson severely. "My opinion is that you will have sufficient social duties in the church to occupy your time, and if you see after the Dorcas society, and the mothers' meetings and these kind of things, you will do very well."

"I am of your opinion, Mrs. Matheson," said Robert Martin; "you may trust me to watch over Ada as carefully as you would do."

"I am sure you will," Mrs. Matheson answered cordially. Then the talk turned upon topics of mutual interest connected with the church life at St. Mungo's. After supper Mrs. Matheson carried Ada off for a thorough inspection of the house, which ended with a visit to the kitchen, where the young wife quite won the hearts of the two middle-aged servants whom Mrs. Matheson had engaged for Wellogate manse.

The first Sabbath of Robert Martin's ministry in Hightown dawned clear and bright and still, one of those quiet, solemn, delicious days we so often have in the late autumn before the winter storms sweep down upon us in all their violence. Before breakfast Ada stole out of doors for a peep at the old-fashioned garden where some autumn flowers lingered still, showing in bright contrast against the rich sombre green of the bays and rhododendrons. The pear and apple trees against the garden wall were laden with their harvest, the season of leaf and bloom was past, and fruitage time had come. Beyond the high wall the young wife saw the tall chimney-stalks of the factories standing out sharply against the clear bright sky ; but no smoke obscured the atmosphere, and the din and roar of factory wheels were hushed because it was the day of rest. She stood leaning against the trellised doorway of the little summer-house dreamily watching the gradual breaking of the sky, her heart filled with a thousand hopes and fears, and earnest resolutions for the future. And when the breakfast-bell rang its noisy summons she entered the house with a fervent prayer that God would bless and help them both in this new life, and make her husband a blessing to the place. The Wellogate church was filled to overflowing that morning, for Robert Martin's reputation as a preacher, had preceded him to Hightown, and

many felt curious to see the new minister of Wellogate and his young wife. As may be imagined, many curious eyes travelled to the crimson-covered pew on the left side of the pulpit, where for forty years Dr. Ainslie's plain-featured housekeeper had sat in solitary state, an object of curiosity or interest to none. Needless to say that the bride was very quietly though richly dressed. Her own taste was exquisite, and without spending much thought or time upon her toilet, she always seemed to wear just what became her best. The sweet young face under the brown velvet bonnet was grave and earnest and a trifle paler than its wont. When her husband came out of the vestry and ascended the pulpit stair she covered her eyes with her hand as if suddenly moved.

Robert Martin looked well in the pulpit. The minister's robe was peculiarly becoming to him, and he wore it with dignity and grace. His opening prayer was very appropriate, the eloquent words, breathed forth in the full, rich, mellow tones, carried his hearers with him, and they feared to lose a word. So it was with the reading of the chapter, and also with his discourse. He chose for his text these words, to be found at the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "A servant of Jesus Christ."

Not for many, many years had such a sermon been preached in the parish church of Hightown.

Those who had been long accustomed to Dr. Ainslie's prosaic platitudes and rambling dissertations felt as if new life were being infused into their veins. The preacher's eloquence, the force of his arguments, his wealth of imagery, and his deep earnestness carried them away, and they followed him breathlessly to the close. Surely if this was an earnest of what they might expect every Sabbath-day, and if the preacher exercised his gifts in his parish work likewise, a great spiritual awakening must inevitably follow. In the afternoon the church was again crowded, and again Robert Martin held the throng spellbound with his eloquence. Again his hearers hung breathlessly upon every word, and at the close of the service congratulated each other that such a star had come into their midst. That was the verdict of the majority, but there were a few observant and thoughtful minds who found it difficult to lay hold of the simple Gospel truth among the flowery mazes of the preacher's eloquence. He appealed to the feelings and flattered the senses. From a literary and artistic point of view his discourse was without a flaw, but would it awaken the ungodly or make plainer to the seeking soul the narrow way of life, or strengthen the feet of any struggling in the heavenward way?



## CHAPTER IV.

### AFTERNOON TEA.

**M**R. and Mrs. Matheson left Hightown on Monday morning ; for the cares of business would not permit the merchant to remain longer away from the city, while his wife's spirit was exercised concerning her household affairs. She was veritably a Martha, careful and troubled about many things, never happier than when at her own domestic helm.

"Now, Ada, you must be sure and write often; and when you weary just run up to Glasgow, you know. Robert can easily spare you," she said fussily. "He has promised not to be selfish," she said, when Ada and she were alone together a few minutes before the carriage came to take them to the station. "I am afraid you will miss the refined and cultured circle of friends we have in St. Mungo's; my Church connection is *such* a comfort to me. But I daresay you will soon



make friends, for, of course, the best people will look you up. Well, my dear, good-bye. I'm sure I don't know how we are ever to do without you at home."

There were tears in Mrs. Matheson's eyes as she spoke, for, in spite of a few weaknesses and peculiarities, she was at heart a good and motherly woman, and she loved her daughter tenderly.

"You will soon grow accustomed to life without me, mamma, and don't fret about me. I shall be very busy and happy, I am sure," Ada replied bravely, but her heart was a little sore. But it was the parting awaiting her downstairs which would try her most of all. Mr. Matheson was pacing restlessly up and down the hall, impatiently longing for them to come down, for he too had a word for his daughter's ear alone. He drew her into the study, shut the door, and took her to his heart.

"My darling, you don't know what it costs your old father to leave you here—what a pang it gives him to think you don't belong to him any more," he said huskily. "It is a fearful thing to have but one child, Ada. I know now wherein those who have large families are to be envied."

"Don't say I am not to belong to you any more, papa," said Ada brokenly. "Although I am married I am as much your daughter as ever ;

more so, for I only know now how good you have been to me, and how I love you."

"And yet you went off and left me, my lassie!" said the merchant. "But there, we are talking treason against Robert, and he does not deserve it. Now, my girlie, promise that you will let us know all your troubles, and if you think your mother or I can help you that you will come home or send for us to come to you."

"Yes, yes, papa, I promise; and you and mamma will come often to us. You will miss Robert in St. Mungo's pulpit on Sundays as much as you will miss me at home," she said, smiling through her tears. He shook his head, and just then the carriage swept up to the door, and his wife's voice called to them that it was time they were off. Then he clasped his darling to his heart again, bade God bless and keep her, and hurried away. Ada did not follow him. She moved over to the window and watched them drive away, with a strange sense of loneliness and desolation stealing over her. She realised in a moment something of what is involved in leaving the home-nest, and felt that she was really only now beginning life. Her sombre thoughts were interrupted by her husband's voice, and, as of yore, these dear tones made every shadow flee. Very gentle, very tender was Robert Martin for his young wife that morning, understanding very well the nature of her

feelings. In obedience to his request, she put on her bonnet, and they had a walk through the town together. Neither of them were particularly impressed with what they saw. Hightown was by no means either a picturesque or beautiful place; it was emphatically a working town, the abode of working people.

The slope of a gentle prominence facing the town was dotted with the villas of the prosperous tradespeople and the more imposing dwellings of the manufacturers; but these were not picturesque surroundings, for the landscape was flat and barren and uninteresting.

"I wonder if I made a mistake in accepting this charge, Ada," said the minister as they slowly retraced their steps through the unlovely labyrinth of streets. "I am afraid neither of us will find it a very congenial atmosphere."

"Don't speak in that way, Robert," said his wife gently. "We do not know for what purpose we have been guided here; but that it will be for our own ultimate good I do not doubt."

"I will try and take your view of it. Well, my darling, I hope you are prepared for an avalanche of visitors, and that your drawing-room is the pink of propriety, for the keen eye of the Hightown matron will take in every minute detail," he said lightly.

"What nonsense you talk, Robert. I do not expect visitors for at least a fortnight."

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"Katy, the housemaid, announced visitors in the drawing-room."

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"Then you will be agreeably, or perhaps disagreeably, disappointed. Curiosity will not allow them to sit at home when there is a new minister's wife and a newly-furnished manse to inspect. My wife was the loveliest woman in church yesterday."

"In your eyes, of course, she was," responded Ada demurely, but her fair cheek flushed at his fond praise. "But, now, don't talk any more nonsense to me, for I am weighed down by the responsibility of my first dinner. I am afraid my cook looks upon me with a mixture of pity and contempt, I looked so bewildered when she came to me for her orders this morning."

Robert Martin was right in thinking that the ladies of the congregation would not be tardy in coming to pay their respects to the wife of their minister. On Wednesday afternoon young Mrs. Martin was writing a letter in the study, her husband having gone to visit one of his sick parishioners, when Katy the housemaid announced visitors in the drawing-room. The young wife took the three cards from the maid's hand and read the names—Mrs. Maitland, Mrs. Douglas, Miss Maitland. It was but natural that the young wife should regard it as an ordeal to face the unknown trio. However, she rose bravely and proceeded upstairs. The slight nervousness she could not quite overcome brought a rich flush to her usually somewhat pale face, and, though quite

unconscious of it herself, she had rarely looked better than she did when she stepped into the drawing-room that afternoon. The pretty tea gown of crimson Cashmere, with its trimmings of delicate lace, became her fair beauty well, and the few ornaments she wore were costly and in exquisite taste. The ladies rose. Mrs. Martin bowed and wished them good afternoon, saying she was pleased to see them. In that first confused glance she could not tell whether they were young or old, but she *did* hear a great rustling of silk attire, which proclaimed that they were richly dressed.

"We did not delay coming, Mrs. Martin, because we felt so for you, being alone in this strange place," said the elder of the three, a very handsome woman with a clear, cold eye, and shrill, harsh voice. "I am Mrs. Maitland of Maitland Park. My husband has been long connected with Wellogate Church, and, though we often worship in the English church, which is quite near to us, we have always a warm side to Wellogate. Mrs. Douglas is my daughter; she married her father's junior partner in the mills. So now you know all about us, and I hope we will be friends."

"I hope so, Mrs. Maitland," Ada said quietly, and wished with all her heart that her husband would come in. She had never been so thoroughly uncomfortable in her life, for she could think of

nothing to say, and yet she was not by nature very reserved.

"What a dear old garden you have here, Mrs. Martin!" said the youngest lady. "It is quite a surprise to see it here right in the heart of the town."

Mrs. Martin turned her eyes gratefully on the sweet face of the speaker and made a ready answer. Florence Maitland was only a girl in years like herself, and somehow in that first moment a feeling of friendliness sprang up between them. She was as different as possible from her haughty mother and her still haughtier sister, who sat erect, calm and icy as a statue void of feeling or life. After Florence spoke conversation flowed more freely, and when Katy brought in the tea-tray Mrs. Martin was quite at her ease and rather enjoying the conversation. The ladies were quick to note the elegant appointments of Mrs. Martin's afternoon tea service, and inwardly pronounced it too fine for a minister's wife. Before tea was over another visitor was announced, a lady who presented in every way a complete contrast to those already seated in Mrs. Martin's drawing-room. She was a little woman, plain of feature and dowdy of attire, wearing a shabby brown merino, cotton gloves, and a depressed-looking bonnet. When the maid announced her name, Miss Rachel Buchanan, the ladies looked



at each other with a very significant expression. Mrs. Martin, too much of a lady and too true a woman to bow down to silk attire, received the plain visitor with much more ease and grace than she had exhibited to the Maitlands. The conventional bow did not satisfy Rachel Buchanan, for she held out her hand to the minister's wife, gripped the delicate white fingers firm and fast in hers, and, looking straight into the sweet earnest eyes, spoke some words audible to Ada alone. They were simply, "My dear, God bless you," but they were the sweetest which any strange lips had yet uttered to the young wife in her new home. If this was the sister of the man who had opposed her husband's election to Hightown, and if her brother at all resembled her, then Mr. Matheson had been right in saying that the Buchanans might prove themselves Robert's best friends in Hightown. A distant bow now passed between the Maitlands and Miss Buchanan, and almost immediately the earlier visitors rose to go. Mrs. Martin parted with them at the drawing-room door, thanked them for their visit and their kind invitation to Maitland Park, and, with a feeling of relief, went back to Miss Buchanan.

"I am no great visitor, Mrs. Martin," said the elder woman, "and but for my brother I should probably not have been here to-day. I was not at church on Sabbath, so I did not see you. I am

astonished to find you so young. Why, my dear, you are only a bairn."

"A little more," laughed Mrs. Martin gleefully, and, drawing in her chair nearer her visitor, took her teacup in her hand and prepared for a cosy chat. "I am so glad you came to-day, and I hope you will come often, Miss Buchanan. I shall need at least one friend in Hightown."

"I am afraid Rachel Buchanan is hardly the friend for a young, bright creature like you, Mrs. Martin," said Miss Buchanan, with a grave, sweet smile. "And there are many who will seek your friendship, never fear. Only, perhaps when you are in trouble you may find me useful. I am always more acceptable in the house of mourning than the house of mirth."

"I am quite sure you are just teasing me, Miss Buchanan," said Ada in her happy way. "And I mean to have you for my friend whether you will or no. There is Mr. Martin's knock. Do you believe me, I longed to hear it half-an-hour ago more than I do now, I felt so nervous with these ladies? There, is that not a stupid speech, Miss Buchanan? Katy, will you please ask Mr. Martin to come upstairs?"





## CHAPTER V.

### A PLAIN WOMAN.

**M**Y husband, Miss Buchanan," said Mrs. Martin when the minister entered the room.

"I am very pleased to see Miss Buchanan," he answered a little pompously, and offered his hand to the shabby little woman who presented such a contrast to his fair, young wife.

"Will you have a cup of tea, Robert?" Ada asked. "I am so sorry you did not return a little earlier. I had some other visitors."

"Yes, I met the ladies from Maitland Park just at the foot of Wellogate," replied the minister. "Is your brother well, Miss Buchanan?" he added, turning to the visitor, who did not look quite so much at her ease as she had done a few minutes before.

"Yes, thank you, he is well; busy as usual," answered Miss Buchanan. "We are thankful that there has been a little improvement in business of late."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the minister without much cordiality. "I have been visiting a sick woman to-day in Patience Lane. Such a place! I was ashamed to find any of my church members living in such a hovel."

"What was the name, Mr. Martin?" asked Miss Buchanan with interest.

"Duncan; the husband is one of your brother's work-people, I think."

"Yes, they are very decent people reduced by much distress. George Duncan is very delicate, and is seldom able to work full time. They had four children, and have lost them all. I am extremely sorry for them both. You will find a good deal of distress in the parish likely. Times have been so bad of late, and mill-workers are as a rule so thriftless that they have little to fall back upon. Then there has been a lot of sickness. Autumn is the unhealthiest season of the year in Hightown."

"Indeed; how is that?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"We can hardly tell. The fogs and the cold winds are always trying here in September and October," answered Miss Buchanan.

"Have you hitherto taken any active part in church work, Miss Buchanan?" asked Mr. Martin presently.

"I have always been accustomed to do a little. I have conducted the Dorcas society and the

mothers' meetings for years, simply because Dr. Ainslie had neither sister nor wife, but I shall be very glad to deliver my reins of office into Mrs. Martin's hands," responded Miss Buchanan with a slight smile.

"Oh, no," cried Ada; "you had much better keep them, Miss Buchanan. I shall be very happy to sit at your feet and learn of you. I know so little, and you must know so much."

"Perhaps you can tell me, then, whether there is any society or fund in the church for the benefit of such cases as that of the Duncans," said the minister inquiringly.

Rachel Buchanan shook her head.

"No; there has never been anything of the kind. Those who employ work-people look after them if they feel so inclined; if not, those in distress must just suffer. I have often wished that some organised plan of visitation and relief could be instituted. In so large a parish as Wello-gate there must of necessity be many needy ones."

"You would not confine the relief to the church itself then?" said Ada inquiringly.

Miss Buchanan's eyes filled with tears.

"My dear Mrs. Martin, when you are as old as I, and have seen as much, you will know that it is those outside the pale of the church who are generally in the greatest need both of spiritual and

physical aid; and in this parish alone, I regret to say, there are hundreds who have never been within a church door."

"Dear me, how terrible!" exclaimed the young wife, with earnest, shining eyes. "What a work it would be to bring all these into the fold, would it not, Robert?" she added appealingly to her husband.

"It would, but it is beyond the bounds of possibility. In every city and large town there must be lapsed masses whom it is impossible to reach."

"Would you say impossible, Mr. Martin?" asked Miss Buchanan with a peculiar swift glance from her expressive eyes.

"I would. It has been proved by philanthropists and practical men times without number," returned the minister quietly.

"Ah well! Sometimes when man lays work down God takes it up, and with Him all things are possible," said Rachel Buchanan in her low, earnest tones. "Well, Mrs. Martin, I must go. It is almost five. I have been here quite an hour."

"That is not long," said Ada with her sweet, kind smile. "You will come again soon?"

"I cannot say. I do not visit much. But *you* will come and see me surely. We live in Scotland Place, the corner house, within sight of the mills. I shall be looking for you soon," said Miss Buchanan.

"My brother will be round some evening, Mr. Martin. He is much occupied during the day. I often tell him he is the hardest-wrought man in his own employment. Good afternoon. May I express the hope that you will have a very happy and useful life in Hightown so long as you elect to remain with us."

"Thank you ; good afternoon," was all the minister said, and, opening the drawing-room door, bowed low to the visitor. His wife accompanied her to the landing and there bade her a warm farewell. She felt drawn to Rachel Buchanan in no ordinary degree ; her own quick sympathies discerned and responded to the large, warm, womanly heart which beat beneath that plain exterior, and she instinctively felt that Rachel Buchanan was a woman to be not only trusted but dearly loved.

"Is she not a charming woman, Robert?" he asked enthusiastically. "Her appearance is only disappointing until she begins to speak, then you wonder how you ever thought her plain."

"You are a little enthusiast, Ada," said the minister smiling slightly. "In my opinion Miss Buchanan is a very ordinary woman who prides herself upon being original and eccentric."

"O Robert, I do not know how you can say so ! I am sure there is no pride about her."

"What is it but pride which makes her brother

and her live in a poor plain style and affect humility when they are fabulously wealthy? I met Mr. Maitland of Maitland Park to-day in the town. Of course I did not know him, but he came up frankly and spoke to me on the street. I had quite a long talk with him, and he gave me a very good idea of affairs in the church. They have been too long in the hands of David Buchanan and his sister, and we must take up a decided position at once. I do not want you to become too intimate with Miss Buchanan, Ada."

Ada sat silent, a slight shade stealing over her fair face.

"You will of course take precedence before Miss Buchanan in all church work, as a minister's wife should," he continued. "I was sorry you yielded up your rights so readily. You will need to learn to be a little less impulsive, dear."

"But, Robert, she is so much older than I, and I am sure fitter in every way for such work, and, oh! I am sure she is a good, true woman," Ada maintained earnestly.

"My love, I did not deny it; only she is self-opinionated and crotchety, like all middle-aged single women, and I do not want you imbued with her Quixotic ideas, my darling, or I am afraid we will begin to disagree."

"Do you think it is Quixotic in her to be grieved because there are so many in the parish who have



drifted away from all good influences?" asked Ada.

"No; but she would deal with them in a Quixotic manner," said the minister a trifle impatiently. "Listen to me, Ada. You must understand that the church at present is in a very low state, and that there are very few well-to-do families connected with it. In these circumstances my first aim will be to bring back as many of these as I can. Then when the membership and the funds are increased we will be better equipped to deal as a church with the outside masses. I have made good progress to-day, for Mr. Maitland promised to return with his family to Wellogate. But for Buchanan he would never have gone away. His return will be followed naturally by that of his son-in-law and partner, Mr. Douglas of Earncliffe. With the co-operation of these two liberal and wealthy men I expect to do wonders in a short time."

Ada Martin sat silent, her earnest eyes following the flight of a swallow which the bleak autumn winds had not yet driven from his haunt in the branching limes in the manse garden.

"But come, my darling, let us lay aside this weary discussion at present," said Robert Martin, vexed to see the shadow on the dear face. "Tell me now, did you not enjoy the visit of Mrs. Maitland and her daughters? I was delighted

when I met the carriage and guessed where they had been. I am so afraid you will miss all your old ties too much, Ada. An agreeable social circle will be the first thing which will reconcile us both to our new home."

"They were very kind and pleasant, dear," Ada answered quietly.

An hour ago she would have expressed her opinion freely, but now she did not care to say that but for the sunny smiles and pleasant unaffected words of Florence Maitland she would have found the visit insufferably formal and dreary.

She was beginning to learn that hard but, for a woman, very common and necessary lesson—to ponder things in her heart and keep silence.





## CHAPTER VI.

### MAITLAND PARK.

**D**ID you enjoy the services, Ada? Did I do well to-day?"

That question Robert Martin asked his wife on the evening of his second Sabbath's ministration in Wellogate. Dinner was over, and they were sitting together in the cosy study in the fading evening light. There were books in plenty on the table, and the tapers ready to light the gas, but both found the brief pause 'twixt daylight and darkness too pleasant to be broken.

"Why do you ask, dear? In my eyes you always do well," the young wife answered with a smile.

"I sometimes wish you would be a little more critical, Ada. It would be a great help to me. I have heard of a minister's wife who mercilessly cut her husband's sermons to pieces, until, figuratively speaking, he had not a leg to stand on."

"I am afraid you would not like that, Robert," said his wife quietly.

"It might be good for me whether I liked it or not. Come now, tell me what you think I made of my text this afternoon?"

"As much as could be made of it, dear. Your description of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness was really splendid. It laid the whole scene so graphically before us; but——"

"But what?"

"I thought after you had finished that it was a little unsatisfactory. I kept waiting for the application. I expected you to compare our present life in this world to the wanderings of the chosen people in the desert, and I felt just a little disappointed when you left off just where you did."

As she spoke the young wife looked a little timidly at her husband's face to see how her first adverse criticism would be taken. His face expressed a little surprise, but there was a smile on the lips which gave her courage to proceed.

"I hoped you will not be vexed with me, dear, because I could not help the thought coming into my mind, that if there were any seeking or anxious souls in the church, they would not be helped any nearer peace by your elaborate description of the Israelites' journey to Canaan. Perhaps it is because I am only a woman and do not know very much, but I cannot help thinking that, whatever

his subject, it is incumbent on a minister to apply it to present needs. I think no sermon should be preached without some direct Gospel truth in it."

"Upon my word, my darling, you are criticising me with a vengeance," exclaimed Robert Martin, and his voice betrayed that he did not quite relish the performance. "I know your predilection for evangelistic discourses; but, Ada, a congregation would soon weary of that. It is necessary to encourage and interest Christian people in holy things as well as to awaken the ungodly."

"I think you are misunderstanding me, Robert, as I feared you would," said his wife in her gentle tones. "I do not say that you should preach evangelistic or revival sermons every Sabbath in Wellogate. I believe that would not be advisable. I only mean that you should have something in every sermon you preach suited for the unconverted and the anxious as well as for your own Christian members."

"You don't know what you suggest, Ada. It is not so easy a thing to write sermons as you imagine; it would certainly be no light task to combine all these and do them justice within the limits of one discourse."

"I daresay not. I know you do your utmost, Robert, and it is very unreasonable of me to find fault. It is easy to suggest improvements, very

difficult to carry them into execution. We will not say any more about it now," she said. "Did you not think it was a little odd of the Maitlands to calmly fill up Mr. Buchanan's pew this morning? I was quite vexed for poor Miss Buchanan. She had to sit behind, and they never even looked to see whether she had a book or not until she leaned over and asked for them."

"I daresay they did not know it was Buchanan's pew, dear," said the minister a trifle absently, for he was pondering his wife's remarks about his sermon. They had opened up a new and rather conflicting vein of thought.

"Oh, they must have known quite well, the names are printed so legibly on the book-board! Most people would have been quite annoyed at their seat being so completely appropriated. But Miss Buchanan's expression never changed. I really think she has a sweet, kind, true face, Robert."

"Dear me, Ada, with what an absurd halo you invest that plain woman! I never thought you were half so romantic," said the minister a trifle testily, for the thoughts suggested by her criticism of his preaching were probing deeper still. "Do you know we are to dine at Maitland Park to-morrow?"

"No; are we?"

"Yes; I forgot to tell you. I looked in on

Mr. Maitland at his office yesterday morning and he asked me."

"I think Mrs. Maitland might have sent a card, Robert. I hope I am not proud, but she knows well enough what is proper, and I can't have her patronising me," said the young wife quickly. "Do you think we should go?"

"Why, of course! Why should we stand on ceremony? I am afraid you will set a bad example to the ladies of the congregation if you begin in that way," said the minister in an amused voice. "It is quite possible that Mrs. Maitland, being the wife of a man who has risen from comparative obscurity, may not be so familiar with the usages of polite society as yourself, and so you must be merciful."

"O Robert, dear, don't let us speak any more about anything to-night! I don't think either of us is in a good mood, and it is Sabbath night. Do light the gas and read something to me. I feel all out of sorts."

"What shall I read, poetry or prose?" inquired Robert Martin, approaching the book shelves.

"Poetry, please; some of those lovely bits from Wordsworth. You know so well where to find them. I might go hunting through all his works and not find them after all."

Gratified by the compliment to his taste in selecting poetical gems, the minister took down the

elegantly bound copy of Wordsworth from its place among the poets, and very speedily the brief annoyance caused by their conversation was swept away and forgotten in their mutual enjoyment of the delightful minstrel of the lakes.

In accordance with her husband's desire, though somewhat against her own inclination, young Mrs. Martin prepared herself to dine at Maitland Park on Monday evening. They drove out in a close conveyance, and as the early October dusk, had fallen before they left home they could not see very distinctly the extensive and finely laid-out grounds which surrounded Maitland Park. The place, however, was very new. Summer sun and winter storms had not yet dimmed the elaborate gilding which adorned the massive iron gateway, the lodge would have been improved by some ivy or creeping things to shelter its naked walls, and the trees which had been plentifully planted were still very young and slender. The limes which grew upon each side of the avenue had thriven best, and in summer their foliage made quite a pleasant shade. The house itself was very imposing, a square solid pile of masonry with long wide windows and a broad flight of steps up to the hall door. It was imposing, but not picturesque nor beautiful, but when you looked at it you felt that it must have cost a great deal of money. I am not sure but that that was the very effect its owners



desired to impress upon the onlooker's mind. Young Mrs. Martin was in evening attire, and had only a fur mantle wrapped about her. She gave it to the servant in the hall, and saying she need not go to a dressing-room, waited a moment till her husband had laid aside his overcoat and hat, then both followed the maid upstairs. The drawing-room at Maitland Park was lofty and handsome, its furnishings costly and elaborate, but it lacked that air of luxurious comfort which many a homelier room can boast. To economise labour and preserve her expensive furniture Mrs. Maitland had dispensed with fires in her public rooms, and gas was substituted, burning in little jets at the back of the highly-polished steel grates. These cold lights did not in any way add to the comfortable aspect of the drawing-room. Mrs. Maitland, resplendent in velvet and point lace, was reclining at her ease in one of the low chairs, but when the servant announced Mr. and Mrs. Martin she rose and stepped forward with an affable smile.

"So glad to see you, Mr. Martin! delighted, I am sure, to welcome you both to Maitland Park!" she said effusively, shaking hands with both. "Would you believe it, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Maitland only told me this morning that he had asked you to dinner? So like a man, my dear, isn't it? You will just need to excuse plain fare. My cook is so particular that unless she knows in good time she

will nor put herself about for anybody; positively she won't. Had I known in time I would have asked some friends to meet you. You will just see our own family circle to-night. It includes Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, of course, who will be over from Earncliffe presently."

Quite breathless with her long explanation and apology Mrs. Maitland sank into her chair; Mrs. Martin quietly begged her not to make any apology, for none was needed, and seated herself on an ottoman opposite her hostess. That lady immediately proceeded to make a keen and critical survey of the exquisite dress worn by the minister's wife, and to wonder where she had got it, for there was a style about it which quite eclipsed the highest effort of the Hightown *modiste*, who had been for some years with a fashionable firm in London. The material was rich silk of an exquisite grey shade, but it was made simply and plainly in accordance with the wearer's express direction and desire. It fitted the girlish figure to perfection, and the massive but chaste gold collar, half hidden, half revealed by the lace which fell about the sweet white throat, with bracelets to match, were her only ornaments. Looking at the two women before him, the minister of Wellogate felt prouder of his wife than he had ever felt before, and, if it must be told, he rather relished the plainly expressed surprise and chagrin on the face of Mrs. Maitland.

Before any conversation could be carried on, Mr. Maitland entered the room, accompanied by his son Frank, a lad of eighteen, who had just returned from school and was but newly introduced to the mill. The wealthy papermaker was a stout man, with grey hair and a rubicund countenance, and a very pompous and overbearing manner. His son was an inoffensive, good-looking boy, who looked with genuine admiration on the minister's pretty wife when his mother introduced him.

"So you have got this length! Glad, I'm sure, to see you; very glad! Hope you'll always feel yourselves at home at Maitland Park," said Mr. Maitland, rubbing his plump white hands together. "Well, sir, and what is your opinion of the place now, eh? Mrs. Martin, do *you* think it'll do, eh?"

"I hope and expect that we will be both happy and useful in Hightown, Mr. Maitland," answered Ada in her sweet, quiet tones. "It is too soon yet to pass an opinion on the place."

"Prudent, eh? I admire prudence, and you'll need it all, I can tell you, in this lively place," laughed the papermaker in his boisterous fashion. "My dear, isn't it about time John and Isabel turned up?" he asked, turning to his wife. "And where's that monkey, Flo? She's never at hand when she's wanted."

"I am here, papa!" cried a sweet ringing voice in the doorway, "and here are John and Isabel too!"

At sight of Florence Maitland's happy face Mrs. Martin's somewhat drooping spirits revived, and she returned her warm hand-clasp with a grateful pressure and a gleam from her sweet eyes which won Florence's heart again as it had done at the manse.

Ada also looked with interest at the fine, frank, handsome face of John Douglas, and as she returned his hearty hand-clasp also she wondered why he had ever wooed and married his cold and stately wife. Presently the gong sounded; Mrs. Martin accepted her host's proffered arm, while her husband took down Mrs. Maitland, and the rest followed to the dining-room. Needless to say Mrs. Maitland's plain fare was a very elaborate repast, served with due magnificence and ceremony. Mrs. Martin was not surprised; she had fully expected it. During dinner Mr. Maitland monopolised the conversation. He addressed his remarks to the minister, but his tone was so loud and his manner so overbearing that instinctively the rest of the company kept silence and listened. Even Robert Martin did not contradict him, whereat Ada marvelled a little, for he expressed opinions and laid down arguments which she knew very well her husband did not approve. She was not sorry when the meal was over, and Mrs. Maitland rose from the table. She hoped for a little chat with Florence in the drawing-room, but in this she was disappointed, for she was

at once appropriated by her hostess, who proceeded to catechise her concerning her parents and her life previous to her marriage.

"O mamma, I am quite sure Mrs. Martin is tired to death answering questions!" cried Florence at length. "Shall I play something, or perhaps you will, Mrs. Martin? Are you at all musical?"

"Yes, I love music. Do you sing?" Ada asked, heaving a perceptible sigh of relief.

"Oh yes, we all sing. Come and let me show you two new songs I had sent me from London," she said coaxingly, and Ada rose and joined her at the piano. The gentlemen entered the room just then, and Mrs. Maitland's attention was diverted for a moment from her lady guest.

"I saw you were bored. *Isn't* it pokey sitting talking about servants and houses and things," whispered Florence sily. "Don't look at me reprovingly; I don't mean any disrespect to mamma. All elderly ladies speak about these things. But *you* are only a girl like me, and I want to talk to you. Do you know I never saw any one half so lovely as you."

"Oh, hush, Miss Maitland!" said Ada, her cheek flushing. "Don't talk nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense; it's truth. Don't call me Miss Maitland. You know my name. John Douglas calls me Flossie; I like that best. Do you know, Mrs. Martin, I love John Douglas as

well as if he were my own brother ; a thousand times better than that stupid boy Frank, who gives himself such airs. Don't you think John is nice ?”

“I do, indeed,” said Ada, and glanced with increased interest at John Douglas's fine face, yet smiling a little at his sister-in-law's candour.

“Nice! he's perfectly splendid, and he's a real true Christian gentleman in everything. When he talks to me seriously I feel far better than if I had been at church. Let me tell you a secret. He is far too good for Isabel, and she doesn't love him one quarter as much as he deserves. I'll tell you all about it another time. May I come and see you by myself some day ?”

“Certainly. I shall be delighted to see you,” answered Ada, amused by the unconventional manner of the young lady ; then their talk was interrupted by Mr. Maitland, who came and seated himself by Mrs. Martin, and despatched Florence to exhibit her musical skill.

The evening passed pleasantly enough, but Ada was not sorry when their cab came and they had to say good-night.

“Well, what do you think of them, Ada ?” asked the minister when they drove away.

“I don't know what to think.”

“No more do I. They must be immensely wealthy, and if I can keep the old gentleman in good humour he will do anything for the church.”

"I like him least, Robert. He jars upon me, and he holds his opinions with great tenacity."

"Most self-made men do. I believe he is not a bad fellow. He is kind and liberal at heart—crotchety a little though. He has taken a fancy to Buchanan's seat, and I must get it for him somehow."

"There are plenty empty seats in the church, Robert, without turning the Buchanans out. I am afraid they would resent it."

"They may, but I am pledged to ask them to remove. The pew is too big for them, and as Buchanan is only a half-day hearer, he should not be obstinate in the matter."

"And will you really ask him to give up his seat, Robert?"

"Yes; I mean to beard the lion in his den to-morrow. I am anxious to make his acquaintance. From what Mr. Maitland says he must be very eccentric, quite a character in fact. My love, how proud I was of you to-night! I never saw you look lovelier!"

Even her husband's praise, which usually fell so sweet on Ada Martin's ears, could not bring the ready smile to her lips at that moment, for that vague, indescribable, but very bitter feeling of disappointment in her husband had stolen into her heart again.



## CHAPTER VII.

### PARISHIONERS.

**S**COTLAND PLACE was not an aristocratic nor even a genteel locality. It ran parallel with the High Street, and, though wider and better paved than that busy thoroughfare, it was not by any means a more desirable place of abode. Yet in Scotland Place David Buchanan, owner of the Scotland Woollen Mills, and one of the wealthiest men in Hightown, elected to dwell. His house stood at the upper corner of Scotland Place, facing an open space which in times gone had been the village green, and where he had erected a drinking fountain for the benefit of the many hundred operatives who daily passed and repassed it to and from his own and other mills. The corner house was a plain, unpretentious looking building, not a residence which many wealthy people would have voluntarily chosen. Old David Buchanan, whose name was still fragrant in Hightown because of his



many good deeds, had built the house in the earlier part of his own career, when Scotland Mills was a comparatively small concern ; and, though long before his death he had accumulated a considerable fortune, and could easily have followed the example of his compeers who had built themselves handsome places of abode in that select locality on the face of Duffus Hill, he continued to dwell in the corner house until, save in memory, it knew him no more for ever. It was endeared to him by many associations. To it he had brought his wife, whom he had married somewhat late in life, because circumstances beyond the control of either had kept them separate in their youth. Here, also, his two children had been born, and, last of all, the old house became hallowed by undying memories of the gentle wife who left him in her prime, when her little ones still sorely needed her care. For all these reasons also it was endeared to the hearts of David and Mary Buchanan the younger. They had known no other home ; within its walls they had had their joys and borne their sorrows ; and every room was like an old friend who had loved and sympathised with them all their lives. So, for all these reasons, the brother and sister would not have exchanged that plain despised house for the palace of a king. Many wondered why neither had married, and of course the more imaginative weaved many a bright romance, which had its

pathetic side, concerning these two who lived their quiet life together. If there was a romance at all, it is not my place here to tell it. If they were reticent concerning their inner life, why should any stranger seek to lift the veil? Such lives are most beautiful in their silence concerning self.

By his equals and contemporaries in the town David Buchanan was misjudged, simply because he was misunderstood. They called his plain living and unostentatious habits parsimony, and yet on the other hand when they were confronted by the munificence of his public and private charities they were struck dumb. When his name was mentioned they shrugged their shoulders and smiled an expressive smile.

"Queer fellow, Buchanan," they would say if asked a direct question concerning him. "Marvellous business capacity and kind heart, but"—an ominous shake of the head would finish the sentence and indicate the speaker's conviction that there was something wrong somewhere. By one portion of the inhabitants of his native town, however, David Buchanan was appreciated and deservedly loved. That portion consisted of his own work-people and the poor and needy, who knew him best. He was kind and generous, but was seldom guilty of bestowing charity indiscriminately. He did not approve the system (which tends to pauperise) of giving money or

goods freely without question or explanation—his aim was simply to help the poor to help themselves. In this way he had done incalculable good in the place, and had made independent and honest citizens out of many who had been among the dregs of the population. He had assisted some to emigrate, had set up others in their own trade or calling, and the half of his own operatives, among them his most trusted servants, he had saved from moral ruin. Of course there were countless failures, for there *are* human beings, though comparatively few, thank God, who are absolutely dead to every sentiment of morality or good; of these David Buchanan had had his share. In his labours of love and mercy, the full extent of which only the day will reveal, David Buchanan was ably supported and aided by his sister. A woman can so often succeed where a man has utterly failed! If she is a good woman and inspired by that Divine love and compassion which yearns unspeakably for the salvation and welfare of humanity her power and influence are almost without a limit. I do think that there are women who come very near the nature of Christ, about whom is breathed the very atmosphere of heaven.

Among many other gifts to the town, David Buchanan had erected in the very heart of the Wellogate a substantial and commodious building intended to be used for missionary purposes. In

this place, on Sabbath mornings, a mission school was held, which was attended by the very poorest children in the district. Mr. Buchanan was the superintendent of this Sabbath school, a duty which, of course, precluded him from attending morning service at his own church. Hence Mr. Martin's remark that he was only a half-day hearer.

Miss Buchanan had not been at all annoyed at the appropriation of her pew by the Maitlands. She was honestly glad to see them in church again, and hoped they intended to return to their allegiance to Wellogate. But the idea that their occupation of the front pew in the gallery had been planned and carried out with the object of securing it to themselves did not for a moment occur to her. She was busy looking over her sick list on Tuesday forenoon preparatory to making her usual Tuesday visitation in the quarters of the poor, when the housemaid showed the minister into the dining-room. She was surprised but truly pleased to see him, and told him so in her sincere and hearty way, hastening to stir the fire to a brighter blaze and to offer him her brother's comfortable easy-chair on the hearth.

"David has just gone out; he will be sorry to hear he has missed you. About three o'clock, when we dine, is the only time you can be sure of finding him in the house," she said with her pleas-

ant smile. "Isn't it cold for October? How is Mrs. Martin? Afraid of that raw and nipping air this morning? Ah, well, she must be careful of herself until she become acclimatised."

"Mr. Buchanan will have gone to the mill, I suppose," said Mr. Martin, stretching out his hands to the grateful warmth, for the morning air was chilly indeed for October.

"Yes; and I must apologise for my attire. This is my visiting day, you know, and I have to dress accordingly. There are *such* places in that wretched Wellogate! Talk about the slums of great cities—I could match them any day in the lanes and closes in Hightown! You would see something of them that day you visited the Duncans?"

"Yes; I was glad to escape from the not too salubrious air of their abode," replied Mr. Martin. As you are going out I will not detain you, Miss Buchanan. I may go on to the mill, I suppose? I am anxious to see your brother on a small matter of business."

The minister did not think fit to explain the nature of his business—in truth, he was a little afraid of Rachel Buchanan's honest and fearless tongue.

"Oh yes; David will be glad to see you, and if you have never been through a wool mill before you will be interested to see it. Well, if that is the

case I will not press you to stay to-day, because it is time I was off. When will Mrs. Martin come and see me do you suppose?"

"Ah, I cannot say; she is not a great visitor. Much against her will she accompanied me to Maitland Park yesterday. We dined there last evening."

"Yes; that would be pleasant. Well, we are very plain folk, as you see, Mr. Martin; but one thing you will be sure of here both from my brother and myself, and that is a hearty welcome at any and all times," said Rachel Buchanan sincerely. "Good morning; my kind regards to Mrs. Martin. You will easily find your way, I think. The big chimney-stalk and the four little ones over yonder pertain to Scotland Mill, and you will soon find out my brother once you are within the gates. Good morning."

Robert Martin left the corner house, feeling annoyed, he could not tell why, at Rachel Buchanan. She had been frank and kind and pleasant enough, but she had exhibited none of that adoring deference which the ladies of St. Mungo's had been wont to lavish upon him, and which he had found so sweet. She spoke to him as if she was his equal, and he rather resented the independent and self-reliant manner in which she went about doing work in the parish. He felt that he, as minister of the Wellogate, should have a voice in the matter, but

that neve. had occurred to Miss Buchanan. She had been so long accustomed to do her own work in her own way, and Dr. Ainslie had so implicitly and unquestioningly trusted her with the charge he could not undertake, that it was not to be wondered at that she did not think of making the young minister her *confidante* and adviser. Life in Hightown was silently to teach Robert Martin a good many things of which he was ignorant before. He was thinking over several plans whereby he could impress Miss Buchanan with his own superior knowledge and rights, when he found himself at the great gates which gave entrance to Scotland Mills. He passed into the wide court-yard and asked a man wheeling a barrow where he would find Mr. Buchanan. The man directed him to the counting-house, which stood a little apart from the main buildings, and assured him he would find "the maister" there. The clerk, who opened the counting-house door in answer to the minister's knock, ushered him into a comfortably furnished inner room, which had the word "private" printed on its glass door, and, leaving him there, said he would go for Mr. Buchanan, who was in the engine-house superintending some repairs going on there. In less than five minutes the door of the inner room was again opened, and David Buchanan entered. They shook hands, a brief "good morning" passed between them, and the minister resumed his seat.

As he did so he looked keenly into the mill-owner's face, for, in spite of himself, he was deeply interested in the man. It was not a handsome face. It was long and sallow and thin, the forehead high and deeply lined, the eyes deep-set and keen. The clean-shaven upper lip seemed to add to the wideness of the mouth, while the somewhat heavy chin and massive jaw gave a stern cast to the features. His hair and whiskers were plentifully streaked with grey, and there was a visible stoop in the tall, loose-looking figure which indicated that he was now going down the hill of life. His attire was careless though not slovenly, but it presented an odd contrast to the faultless garb of the minister.

"I have to apologise for being so tardy in paying my respects to Mrs. Martin and yourself," said David Buchanan in deep and not unmusical tones. "I am a busy man, and though I did not come personally to express my wishes for your welfare in Hightown, they are none the less sincere. I hope you are likely to find it a congenial sphere, where your labour will be both pleasant and profitable."

"Thank you ; as yet it is impossible for me to say," said Robert Martin quietly. "Plenty of hard work there will certainly be, for the church and parish have been much neglected of late years."



"The church has certainly fallen away in numbers, but that can be traced to very natural causes," said David Buchanan. "Dr. Ainslie was in no sense of the word a popular preacher, though he was a sincerely good man. We are in hopes," he added with a slight smile, "that you will fill the empty pews once more."

"I hope so. Miss Buchanan would tell you that the Maitlands were in church on Sabbath morning?" said Robert Martin inquiringly.

"She did, and I was glad to hear it, for their example will probably be followed," returned David Buchanan. "Mr. Maitland's father was one of the leading men in Wellogate in the early days of Dr. Ainslie's ministry among us, and my father and his were colleagues in the eldership and warm friends as well."

"Ah, then, you must be intimately acquainted with the present Mr. Maitland."

"I have known him all his days, but we are not intimate," returned David Buchanan briefly. "Were you at the house this morning?"

"Yes, but, as my business was with you I did not detain Miss Buchanan, who was going out," answered the minister.

The mill-owner nodded, but did not ask what was his business. Robert Martin wished he would.

"I have come to proffer a request, Mr. Buchanan,"

he said at length. "In fact, I have a favour to ask."

"Which I shall be happy to grant if it be in my power," David Buchanan supplemented at once.

"First, let me ask, have you a particular predilection for the front pew in the gallery where you now sit?"

David Buchanan elevated his eyebrows in surprise.

"I can hardly tell. I have sat there since the first day I went to church, a little fellow in socks and a white blouse. Yes, I believe I *have* a predilection for it, now that I come to think of it."

"Then you would not be inclined to give it up?"

"That would depend on circumstances. If, for instance, the church should increase so rapidly that every inch of space was required, my sister and I would be glad to change our pew for a smaller one, or make room for others beside us."

"Mr. Maitland and his family would like the pew, Mr. Buchanan, and, believing you would be quite willing to oblige them, seeing it is too large for you, I volunteered to ask you to do so."

"Did Mr. Maitland ask you to bring that request to me, Mr. Martin?"

"He knows I am here to-day, and for what purpose."

"Well, if the front pew in the gallery is essential to the comfort of Mr. Maitland and his family, let him have it by all means. I daresay my sister won't mind the change," said David Buchanan, with a peculiar dry smile, which made the minister feel intensely uncomfortable and wish he had not come. "Now, since that is settled, would you like to see through the mills? I assure you it is an interesting sight."

"Thank you; yes. I should enjoy it," said Robert Martin, rising as he spoke. "I hope I have not annoyed you by bringing such a request to you?"

A sunny smile came upon David Buchanan's face, relieving its stern gravity and making it look almost handsome.

"Oh, dear, no; I am not so thin-skinned as all that!" he said cheerily. "But I don't mind telling you I would have given up my seat with a better grace had Maitland asked me himself. Forgive me if I offer advice unasked, Mr. Martin, but I think you would be wise to decline performing these sort of obligations for people. You will find too many ready to make use of you in this place, and you will soon find your position no sinecure. Well, if you are ready we will go."

Like many young men, Robert Martin had a high opinion of his own penetration and powers, and was accustomed rather to resent advice than

to accept it. But on this occasion he could not help feeling grateful to David Buchanan for his words, they were uttered with such a depth of kindness and were so evidently prompted by a generous purpose.

An hour later he left Scotland Mills imbued with a deep respect and admiration for their proprietor; and yet he could not quite understand him.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

**I**N the more vigorous days of Doctor Ainslie's ministry in Wellogate the kirk-session had consisted of eight members. That number, however, had been gradually diminished by death and other causes, and, as the vacancies had never been filled up, Mr. Martin found the church possessed of only four elders.

These were David Buchanan, proprietor, and George Lawrie, manager, of Scotland Mills; William Muirhead, a merchant in Market Street; and the parish schoolmaster, who was also clerk to the session. As may be imagined, this state of affairs could not be satisfactory to the young minister. Before he could accomplish any reforms, or inaugurate the improvements he had in contemplation, he must have the co-operation of efficient and enlightened members of session. Accordingly he cast his eyes about to see where

these were to be found. Mr. Maitland and John Douglas he immediately fixed upon ; also one Gavin Dunlop, a young solicitor lately established in Hightown, and rapidly making for himself a reputation in his profession. When these were secured another would probably be suggested to his mind. His first step was to consult the joint-proprietors of Maitland Mills, and to learn whether they would be willing to become nominees.

Accordingly he betook himself one morning to the gigantic pile standing on the bank of the swift-running river which turned the wheels of so many great industries. He found the older partner of the firm alone in the private room, and was received with characteristic blandness and courtesy. Mr. Maitland affected a great regard for the gifted young minister of Wellogate, and it was his habit to praise him in his pompous and rather patronising way whenever an opportunity offered.

"Good morning. I like you to drop in to the mills in this unceremonious sort of way," he said, rubbing his hands pleasantly together. "It is good both for you and me. I have always thought and said that there is too rigid a line drawn betwixt clergy and men of business. I have heard it remarked often that ministers have no head for business ; how can they have, bless me, when they live so much within the narrow limits of their profession, and never go where they could get

some practical knowledge? But there, I am talking nonsense as usual. Mrs. Martin well, eh?"

"Yes; thank you," replied Mr. Martin, not thinking it worth his while to contradict the statement that he was talking nonsense, for as such, indeed, the minister regarded it. "I am very much obliged to you for bidding me so cordially welcome in business hours, but I am afraid my visit is not altogether unceremonious. It is a church matter I have come about to-day."

"Well, well! delighted I am sure to advise or help," said the mill-owner. "I was just saying to Mrs. Maitland the other day that I was growing quite as deeply interested in Wellogate as my old father used to be."

"I am heartily glad to hear it, for it gives me the hope that my errand will not be in vain," said the minister. "Probably you know that the kirk-session, like many other things in the parish, wants reform. It consists of only four members, and of the efficiency of these I am doubtful."

"Isn't Buchanan one?" queried Mr. Maitland.

"Of course, I except him, seeing there can be no doubt of his efficiency," said Robert Martin hastily. "Would you be willing to accept office?"

"Well, you see, I have never been mixed up in church squabbles, Mr. Martin, and there's always something of that kind in a church, you know, if there's any life in it at all," said Mr. Maitland

with a slow smile. "But out of my personal regard for you, and to show you that I desire to strengthen your hands and help you in every way, I shall be very happy to accept office—if elected."

"Oh, there can be no fear of that. Do you think I may count upon Mr. Douglas also?"

"Ah, I can't say. John is queer sometimes; has peculiar notions about the fitness of things, but he is thoroughly conscientious. If he accepts, will do his duty better than any of his coadjutors, I believe; but you must see him yourself."

"Is he about the works?"

"No, he is at Dunlop's office on a little business matter, a litigation affair which has cost us some trouble. Clever dog that Dunlop. *He* would make an elder for you now; would carry everything before him, and his eye for business is something marvellous. He can see three times as far as most men."

"I was thinking of him. He tells me he has only attended Wellogate since I came, and that he intends to become a member."

"Ah! that's right! Get the young men into the church. It's young blood we need to infuse new life into both Church and State. I believe you'll make the desert of Wellogate blossom like the rose, Mr. Martin," said Mr. Maitland, smiling with delight at his own eloquence. "Well, after you get a fully-equipped session, what are you



going to make it do, eh? Of course, you have some aim in view."

"I have a great many aims, I confess," laughed Robert Martin. "I want the church renovated. Though we cannot alter its external appearance, we can at least beautify the interior. You must admit it stands in sore need. Then why should we not have an organ? Is the manner in which the praise is conducted at present agreeable to you, Mr. Maitland?"

"Certainly not. It is most offensive to a cultured ear, and has, without doubt, been one cause of so many secessions. Go on! go on, and prosper, Mr. Martin! You are ambitious, but I like ambition in a young man, especially when, as in your case, it points to such worthy aims."

"Ah! then I can rely upon your support, and the knowledge will give me confidence. Of course, there will be a considerable number of prejudices to be overcome first; but if the attendance keeps up and the membership continues to increase, and there is no reason to suppose otherwise, I am in hopes that, when the improvements come to be settled, the old-fashioned, prejudiced folk will be found decidedly in the minority."

"I hope so. Have you ever spoken of these things to Buchanan?"

"Not yet; but I expect him to support me also."

I have had no reason to believe that he will stand in the way of the church's advancement."

"Perhaps not, perhaps not. He is eccentric, you know. Look how *he* spends his money; not in outward show, I promise you, though in far more foolish things. I'm sure I hope you may be right, because he has a great influence over the poorer folk in the church. Perfectly natural and right that he should have too, when he gives them so much. The bond between them, of course, is that of debtor and creditor, and wherever he points they must go."

"I should not think Mr. Buchanan a man likely to use his influence selfishly," Robert Martin felt impelled to say.

"Oh, well, not always. I don't want to be uncharitable, and really he was very generous about that seat. Would you believe, Douglas was in a perfect fury about it? It was only the other day he learned the story. That monkey Flo let it out, and, as you would observe on Sunday, he took his wife into another pew. He talked of apologising to Buchanan! Absurd nonsense, when the man gave the seat of his own free will."

"Well, I think I will not detain you any longer, Mr. Maitland. I hope to see Mr. Douglas another time," said the minister, hastening to change the subject, for the recollection of his interview with

David Buchanan about the seat made him somehow very uncomfortable.

"Must you be off already? Well, good morning. Kindest regards to Mrs. Martin. Tell her my women-folk have all fallen in love with her, and that she must go soon and often to Maitland Park," said Mr. Maitland effusively.

The minister thanked him, shook hands, and went his way. By a happy chance he met the junior partner of the firm on his way back from the lawyer's office, and they stood a moment to talk. A great contrast did John Douglas's quiet, unobtrusive, yet sincerely earnest manner present to the gushing effusiveness which marked the demeanour his father-in-law usually presented to the world. In private life Mr. Maitland had been known to exhibit a very hasty and masterful temper, but before the public his urbanity was seldom ruffled. There are too many of his type, who wear their smiles outside and reserve their less pleasant looks for home, where they are most required, and where they would do most good.

"I am extremely glad that I have met you, Mr. Douglas," said the minister. "I have just been at the mill on a double errand."

"Yes. What can I do for you?" inquired John Douglas, with his pleasant smile.

"I need not beat about the bush, I suppose," answered Robert Martin, smiling also. I am

about to reorganise the kirk-session, and I hope to secure you for the office of the eldership. Mr. Maitland has already promised to accept if elected."

John Douglas slightly shook his head.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, but I would rather not," he said quietly.

"Why? What possible objection can you have? There are no onerous duties connected with it, and I know of none fitter than you."

"You know very little about me, after all," said John, quietly still and with a slight smile. "Perhaps I might be allowed to be the best judge of my own fitness."

"What are your objections? Excuse me if I seem to press the question. It is my extreme anxiety to secure gentlemen of principle and standing that makes me urge you more than I might otherwise do."

"I cannot give you any valid reason, except that I do not feel myself qualified for the position," was all John Douglas replied.

"In what way?"

"I cannot explain myself further, Mr. Martin."

"But, Mr. Douglas, forgive me if I remind you that it is the duty of such as you to strengthen my hands in my work. Single-handed, a minister is comparatively powerless. It is impossible for him, however willing he may be, to supervise everything," said the minister with some warmth.

"I hope it will never be necessary for you even to attempt it, Mr. Martin," said John gravely. "Apart from the eldership, you will not find me unwilling to help, I assure you."

"But it is exactly in the eldership I require help at present. Won't you consider the matter? Talk it over with Mrs. Douglas. I am sure she will urge it upon you as earnestly as I have done."

At mention of his wife's name a peculiar shade of sadness darkened for a moment the sunshine in John Douglas's pleasant eyes, but it passed as briefly as it came.

"It is not a matter in which my wife's influence would be of any avail, Mr. Martin," he said, still quietly, but even more decidedly. "I must settle it with my own conscience, which, I take it, is my best guide and judge in every action of my life."

"Undoubtedly," said Robert Martin, not without a certain stiffness, which John was quick to note. "Well, I suppose I can make nothing more of you, but I won't forget your promise to assist in other ways."

"You will find me ready enough to redeem any promise I make. I have never broken one in my life," replied John. Then they parted.

As he walked, somewhat slowly, across the green and down Scotland Place the minister was occupied thinking of the man from whom he had just parted. He was manly and sincere in his

refusal, and evidently acted under honest conviction that he was unfitted for the grave and responsible office of the eldership. For that he deserved and commanded respect; for how few there were who would freely admit that they were not good enough; how many were willing, nay, eager, to take responsibilities upon themselves without so much as pondering this question of fitness, so essential an element in a harmonious and useful whole! A shining brass plate, with the words, "Gavin Marsh Dunlop, W.S.," engraved thereon suddenly riveted Mr. Martin's attention, and, finding himself at the solicitor's door, he involuntarily stood still, and, after a moment's hesitation, rang the bell. The office-boy, without inquiring his name, showed him at once into his master's presence. Mr. Dunlop was writing a letter when the visitor was ushered in. and did not look round till he had finished it. He jumped up with a brief apology, shook hands with the minister, and asked for Mrs. Martin. Then he poised himself on his desk stool, crossed his legs, and prepared for a chat. Gavin Dunlop was a smart, dapper young man, foppish in appearance and dress, possessed of good professional capacity, and having much conceit in the same. A man you might readily enough trust with any matter requiring his professional skill, but emphatically not a man whom you would make your friend.

Mr. Martin explained the nature of his errand, received a ready response to his request, and then the talk drifted into less serious subjects.

Mr. Dunlop was not troubled with any delicate scruples concerning his own fitness for the office, and, as it would give him a more substantial and responsible standing in the town, he was quite willing to accept it.





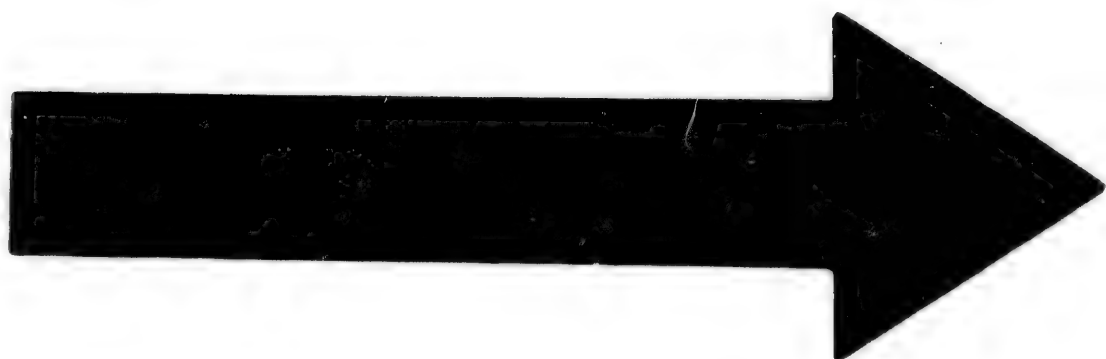
## CHAPTER IX.

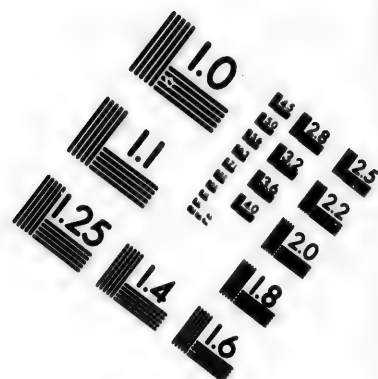
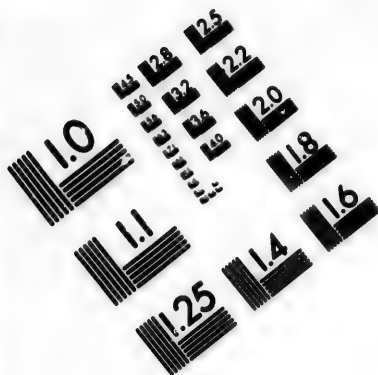
### PUSHING ON.

**S**IX men were nominated by the congregation for the office of the eldership ; of these, four receiving the largest number of votes were elected, and in due course ordained. They were Mr. Maitland and Willian Dryden, his cashier ; Doctor Carnegie and Gavin Dunlop, efficient men, every one. So the Wellogate Church began the new year under the happiest and most prosperous auspices. The eloquent discourses of its minister continued to attract large audiences to the sometime despised parish kirk, and his name became a household word in Hightown.

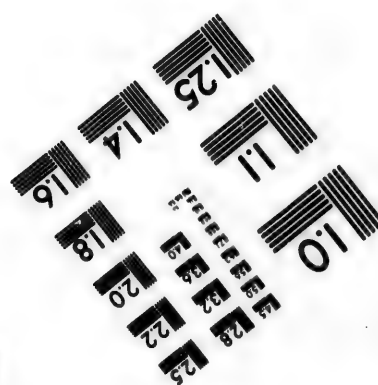
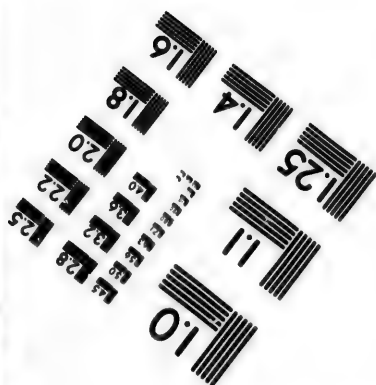
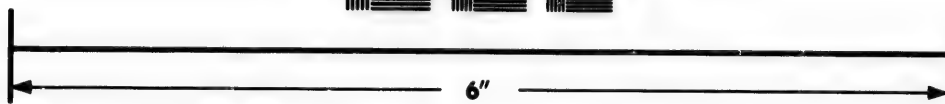
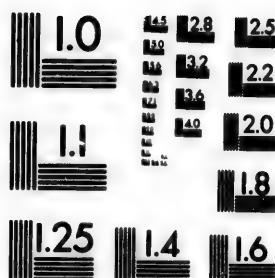
Evidently determined not to spare himself, Mr. Martin took his Bible class on Sabbath mornings, and intimated a course of twelve lectures on the book of Job for the evenings throughout the winter. They were very largely attended, and were spoken of as an intellectual treat, giving evidence







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of careful intelligent study by a cultured and scholarly mind. Mr. Martin was not at all intoxicated with his success; he accepted it as his due. He told his wife laughingly that it was no more than he had expected, and teasingly reminded her of her own and her father's dismal questionings regarding his fitness for the charge he had undertaken—a question of which, after all, he had been the best judge. Ada smiled, happy in his happiness, woman enough to rejoice in her husband's success and popularity, of which she had, without doubt, just reason to be proud. While the minister of Wellogate thus distinguished himself in the church, his young wife was not less busy without its walls. Her work was of a different kind, her ministry not one which seeks applause, but which is performed silently in undreamed-of nooks and corners, without a thought of approval or reward. Robert Martin, himself busy with his own aims and plans, was really ignorant of the magnitude of the work his fragile young wife did in the parish. He knew she was out a great deal, he heard her speak of her visiting days and her poor folk, but he did not trouble to inquire very minutely into it. He did not visit much himself. He had promised a house-to-house visitation when he came first to the parish, but the weeks flew by and he had never yet seen his way to accomplish or even to begin it. He had thoughts of suggesting the employment of a

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"Her visiting days and her poor folk."—Page 90.

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missionary to aid him in that part of his work, but deferred it until he saw his way clearly.

When the lectures and the Bible class were suspended for the season, he began to bestir himself in other things connected with the church. He had laboured conscientiously all winter, he had raised the church from its fallen state and filled it to overflowing by the unaided effort of his own genius, and now he looked for his reward. The time had come for the fulfilment of some of the aims he had confided to Mr. Maitland, and he wanted the church restored. He only wished that it had been possible to erect a new place of worship to which men might point after he was away, saying, "Robert Martin built it." But that idea was beyond the bounds of fulfilment. It was somewhat unfortunate that not one of the heritors resided near enough Hightown to make Wellogate Church their place of worship. There were four. The Earl of Arrol, who had not slept beneath the roof-tree of Arrol Castle, his —shire estate, since he attained his majority. He was a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-weel, from whom it would be unwise to expect much. But his mother, the Dowager Countess, though resident in England, still retained a warm love for her husband's native land, and being interested in every good work, might possibly be induced to influence her son. Colonel Macdougall of Bonniwell was the next largest

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heritor, and though absent with his regiment in India, could be approached by Gavin Dunlop, who was the agent for his estate. Sir James Montgomery of Runes, though worshipping with the Episcopalians, was a heritor of Wellogate, and directly he heard of the proposed renovation of the old church intimated a subscription of a hundred pounds. The fourth heritor was Mr. Walter Gray of Kingray, who had amassed a large fortune in trade. He was now an old man, almost a confirmed invalid, and living a solitary, secluded life in the beautiful house he had bought when he retired from business. He was without kith or kin in the world, and was said to be very miserable in spite of his great possessions. Such, then, were the individuals upon whom Robert Martin depended for the wherewithal to renovate his church. He wrote himself to the Earl of Arrol, laying his plans before him, and asking his consent and aid in carrying them out. In the course of a week the answer came through a firm of London solicitors. It was very brief, simply stating that the Earl had no objections to the proposed alterations, and promising a donation of fifty pounds towards carrying them out. The minister was bitterly chagrined, but held his peace till he had communicated with the other two. Sir James Montgomery having already promised a hundred, Mr. Martin was in hopes that Colonel Macdougall and Mr. Gray

might make up the sum to five hundred, which, with any voluntary contributions the wealthier members of the congregation might be inclined to give, would raise a sufficient sum to carry out the work. Gavin Dunlop wrote at once to Colonel Macdougall; but though he was Mr. Gray's agent likewise, he would not be persuaded to approach the master of Kingray either personally or by letter. The old man had just returned from wintering at Mentone, and the lawyer suggested that Mr. Martin should wait upon him without delay. The minister, confident in his own powers of persuasion, readily acquiesced, and walked out to Kingray one lovely evening early in April. It was three miles beyond the town, and the house was situated on a piece of rising ground on the south bank of the river which watered the policies, and which, abounding in trout and salmon, was strictly preserved. The beautiful grounds were closely shut up also, and the master of Kingray was known as one of the most conservative proprietors in the district. He was spoken of as a strange, eccentric, cross-gained old miser who would not willingly give pleasure to a living thing. The more charitable regarded him with pity, for he had been tried by the bitterest of family sorrows. The place was exquisitely kept. As the minister of Wellogate slowly wended his way up the fine avenue, shaded by its spreading beech and elm, he looked in vain

for a dead leaf or a withered blade of grass on the soft, green sward, or for a weed on the smoothly rolled gravel. The avenue was a mile long, and when the minister reached the end and saw the old house before him, he stood still a moment to admire the picture in silence. It was indeed a beautiful house, in which one might be content to live and die. In times gone by it had been one of the most cherished and fondly-loved homes of the Arrols, but had been sold by the present Earl because he stood in urgent need of the thousands it could bring. The sale of Arrol Holme had been a great blow to his mother, who had never set foot in Scotland after it. Walter Gray had renamed the place, but not yet had the country folk grown accustomed to the change. To them, in all probability, it would remain the Holme to the end.

Mr. Martin's ring at the bell sent the echoes sounding through the house, and brought a very astonished-looking maidservant hastily to the door. Evidently the appearance of a visitor was a very rare occurrence at Kingray.

"Is Mr. Gray at home, and could I see him?" asked the minister.

"He is at home, sir, but"—she hesitated a moment, and looked doubtfully at the card the minister offered—"the master seldom sees any one now, sir. He has not been downstairs for nearly a month."

"I will wait, if you please, until you take my name to him," said the minister. "Tell him I have walked out to see him on important business."

"Very well, sir, I'll take your message," said the girl, politely, "but you won't be disappointed if Mr. Gray won't see you."

She opened a door on the left side of the spacious hall, and, having ushered the minister into the room, carried his message upstairs. Left alone, Robert Martin looked curiously and with interest round him. He was in the library of the house, a fine old room with lofty walls and a magnificently carved oaken roof, worth a fortune in itself. The furniture was oak also, of modern workmanship, but chosen in harmony with its surroundings. The book shelves were filled with the gems of literature, and as Robert Martin walked round and read some of the titles he involuntarily breathed a covetous sigh. He was wondering whether this merchant prince were a *connoisseur* in literature and art, when the door opened and the maid again appeared.

"My master will see you, sir," she said. "Will you please to step upstairs? You will excuse him being in his dressing-room; he has not been out of it since he came home. We think he caught cold on the journey; the east winds were so bitter last week."

Somewhat amused at the girl's readiness to

impart information regarding her master, for whom she had evidently a great regard, the minister made some suitable reply and followed her upstairs. The dressing-room where the master of Kingray was now obliged to spend so much of his time was a large and pleasant room, with two wide windows looking to the south. It was luxuriously furnished. Surely everything to add to the comfort and ease of an invalid was there! He was sitting in his easy chair, a small, thin figure, wearing a rich dressing-gown, while a little velvet cap surmounted his scanty grey hair. His face was painfully worn, but his keen, black eye was sharp and penetrating in its glance, and when, at the opening of the door, he turned his head and looked the minister straight in the face, Robert Martin felt as if that look read him to the very soul. He advanced at once, extended his hand to the master of Kingray, and uttered a few words of greeting and sympathy which none knew how to express more gracefully than he.

"Pray, be seated, Mr. Martin—isn't Martin the name?" said the old man. "So you are the new minister of Wellogate. I heard about your election when I was abroad. You are very young."

"A fault which is daily mending, Mr. Gray," said the minister, rather tamely.

"I suppose so; but if you have grace enough the youth won't matter," said the old man with a slight

smile. "Well, as my servant said that your business was important, I conclude that this is not a mere pastoral visit, Mr. Martin."

"I had a definite object in hurrying out so soon after your return home, Mr. Gray," said Robert Martin. "But if you are too weak to be troubled with it I can easily defer it till another time."

"Another time I shall probably be weaker, so you had better say your say. Is it a church matter? I suppose it will be money you want; ministers always *do* want it for something or other."

"They certainly have to ask it pretty frequently, and the task is not a pleasant one, Mr. Gray," said the minister a little stiffly. "People forget that it is the need of the Church which necessitates the asking, not the personal need of the minister; though he is too frequently made to feel as if he were begging on his own account."

"I believe there's something in that," said the old man musingly. "I daresay I spoke without thinking. Well, what can I do for you?"

"I want to ask your advice and help about the church, Mr. Gray, seeing you are a heritor. I am setting a movement on foot to have it restored."

"Yes. I don't disapprove of that. It needs repair. Have you consulted the other heritors?"

"Yes. The Earl has only promised fifty pounds; Sir James Montgomery a hundred; and we are

waiting a communication from Colonel Macdougall."

"Ah, poor Arrol! His own needs are the crying ones at the present time. I question if even the fifty be forthcoming. Well, how much do you want?"

"Six or seven hundred."

"And suppose Macdougall and I give a hundred a-piece, where is the rest to come from?"

"I am in hopes that some of the wealthier members will do something."

"But surely seven hundred pounds is a great deal of money to spend in repairing an old place. You could almost build a new one for that money."

"Scarcely," said Robert Martin, with a slight smile. "But we may as well do it handsomely."

"I suppose so. Well, gather as much as you can and get the repairs executed. I'll make up whatever deficiency you have. Don't thank me, if you please; there is no need for it. I am not sacrificing anything, nor shall I be called upon to exercise any self-denial, so my gift is not so very valuable as it seems," said the old man quietly. "Well, they tell me you are doing great things in Hightown. I presume you must find it a congenial sphere."

"I trust I do my duty in it, Mr. Gray," said Robert Martin, with just a slight accent of conscious pride.



"I hope so. But, then, we are not always the best judges of our own actions. Will you answer me a question, Mr. Martin? I have put it to more than one young minister, and I have never got a very satisfactory answer," said the master of Kingray, fixing his keen, quiet eyes full on the minister's handsome face. Taking his silence for consent, he immediately continued: "What is your aim in your profession? Is it to save as many souls as, by the grace of God, you can, or is it for your own aggrandisement and welfare? Whether is your Master's glory or your own your first and dearest interest?"

"I trust I never place myself before my Master, sir," said Robert Martin with dignity. "I believe I am sincere in saying that my first aim is to preach the Gospel so that many souls may be turned to righteousness."

"Thank you. I beg your pardon for my question. It may seem rude to you; but I am an old man, and since I have been cut off from the world I have pondered these things in my heart. I am growing exhausted with talking, so you will excuse me if I ask you to withdraw. My servant will give you some refreshment downstairs, for you will need it after your long walk."

"No, thank you. I enjoyed the walk and need nothing," said Robert Martin, rising. "I must again thank you for your generous kindness."



"Pray don't," said the old man, with a deprecating wave of the hand. "Well, good-bye. Let me say one thing. You are a young man and I am an old man, so perhaps you won't take it ill. See to it that God's help and blessing go with you in whatever you do, or your work will be barren and unfruitful. Unless you are truly His servant yourself you can never teach others to serve Him. That is the rock upon which many besides ministers split. I daresay I have no right to offer you such advice. Looking back upon my own barren and misspent life, which might have been rich in fruit had I served the Lord, I feel impelled to warn you, lest your old age be as desolate and unblessed as mine. Good-bye."

Unable to frame an answer to that strange speech, and feeling himself finally dismissed, the minister quitted the room and the house. He had obtained the fulfilment of his desire and more, but he neither felt elated nor satisfied. And the still small voice, whispering sadly of his shortcomings and unworthiness, was his close companion all the way home.





## CHAPTER X.

### OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES.

**T**'RADE had been dull all winter in Hightown, and several of the manufacturers, Mr. Maitland among them, had reduced the wages of their operatives. As the year wore on business did not improve, and there were many idle people in the town. Such being the state of affairs, money did not flow in towards the church repairs. Mr. Maitland and Mr. Douglas promised fifty guineas each, and Gavin Dunlop and the doctor twenty pounds; and there the subscriptions stopped. Mr. Buchanan had never passed an opinion, good or bad, concerning the restoration of the church. When it was discussed in his presence at meetings of the session he held his peace. Therefore, when the minister applied to him to lend a helping hand, he was not unprepared for the answer he received.

"In these times I have so much to do with my

money, Mr. Martin, that I cannot promise you anything," he said quietly but decidedly.

"But you will admit that it is a worthy object?" said Mr. Martin, determined to make him pass some opinion on the subject.

"I do not deny it. Only I may be permitted to think there are many worthier at present. You have no idea of the destitution in the town consequent upon this terrible depression in trade. But perhaps you do not see so much of it as I do," said David Buchanan significantly.

The minister's face flushed at the implied reproach, and his quick temper leaped up in a moment.

"What do you mean to insinuate, sir?" he asked hotly.

"I insinuate nothing," responded Mr. Buchanan, with a somewhat sad smile. "I simply say that, being so much occupied with other things besides your parish work, you cannot possibly be aware of the poverty existing at present. I could not conscientiously give of my substance to rebuild the church when there is such crying need without its pale."

"The church in its present state is a disgrace to any parish," said Robert Martin, still hotly, for he was much annoyed. "We do not grudge money to beautify and embellish our own homes; surely it should not only be a privilege but a joy to us to adorn the sanctuary?"

"I will have mercy and not sacrifice," said David Buchanan, more to himself than to his listener. Then, after a moment, he added inquiringly, "I was told that Mr. Gray of Kingray had volunteered to cover any deficiency, but possibly it might only be a gossiping rumour."

"It is quite true, but we must not take undue advantage of his generosity. It will be to our own credit to receive as little as possible from him."

"I do not quite see it in that light. Mr. Gray has a large fortune, and he gives very little away. Why should he not spend it freely for the church, seeing he is no believer in charitable relief?"

"I see we can never agree on this question, so I had better go," said the minister stiffly. "May I ask as a favour that you will not seek to influence others to follow your example?"

David Buchanan turned his keen, mild eye for an instant full upon the minister's face, but made no other answer. He did not need; that look was eloquent enough.

"How is Mrs. Martin?" he asked courteously. "My sister was remarking that she thought her looking pale and worn. She has worked very hard all winter, and needs a rest. She will welcome her holidays, I fancy."

"I am afraid there will not be many holidays for either of us so long as there is so much requiring our attention at home," said the minister, recover-

ing his equanimity, and feeling rather ashamed of his hastiness of speech. "We have the promise of a very hot summer. Perhaps, if we have a plentiful harvest, trade may improve."

"We will hope so. Well, good-bye," replied David Buchanan, and the minister went his way. When he was left alone the mill-owner leaned his head on his arms, and his face assumed an expression of deep, almost sorrowful gravity. The doubts which had led him to oppose the election of Robert Martin to Wellogate were being surely fulfilled, and he saw the church he loved becoming, not a tabernacle for the pure and humble worship of the Lord, but a centre for man's ambition and empty forms, such as please the eye but cannot touch the heart. Leaning his head upon his ledger, David Buchanan prayed earnestly for the church and for its minister, that his heart might be awakened to the reality and divine nature of his calling, and that even yet he might be numbered among those who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, because they have turned many to righteousness.

It was agreed that while the alterations were being carried on the congregation should worship in the Town Hall. The contractors promised to have their work completed in four or five months, and, allowing a margin for the usual delays, Mr. Martin hoped to hold inaugural services in the restored church either on the Christmas or New Year's

Sabbath-day. He hoped to secure the services of one of the leaders of the Church, whose name was eminent in literature as well, and who would do honour to the occasion. So in these bright visions and glowing hopes of future success the summer wore away. In August the minister and his wife took a month's holidays. He was anxious to go abroad, but Ada pleaded so hard to be allowed to go home to her father's coast residence on the Gareloch, where she had been wont to spend the happy summers of her girlhood, that he was obliged to forego his planned trip. She needed rest. It seemed to those in the parish who loved the minister's young wife, and these were many, that she had aged in the nine months she had lived in the manse of Wellogate. She had come among them a bright-faced girl, whom many had pronounced far too young and inexperienced for her position. They could not say so now. The sweet face had lost its ruddy colour; the eye, though clear and gentle as of yore, was less bright; and her expression was one of almost habitual gravity, as if she found life to be a thing of terrible earnest. Yet what sorrow or care could come near her? She was cherished by the deep tenderness of a husband devoted to her, encompassed by the love and prayers of his people, and strengthened by the affection of many true friends. She was of a sensitive, earnest nature, upon which the mysteries and realities

of life weighed very heavily. She pondered things in her heart ; they took a hold upon her so deep that she could not shake it off. She was keenly alive to the smallest duty and responsibility, and fearful lest she should fall short. She was not less anxious where her husband's work was concerned. Soon after her marriage the vague doubts which troubled her concerning him became settled convictions. The fear lest, while he was trying to lead others to the water of life, he had not yet tasted its saving spring himself, became a certainty which was an agony to her. She saw him proud of the dignity and success of his ministry, bound up in self and selfish aims, which sapped the springs of his unselfish interest in others. She listened to his fine discourses, she followed every word of his beautiful and appropriate prayers, with her own deep-breathed and silent petitions that the reality of his work might be made plain to him. In her intercourse with the people she did not marvel at the absence of a true and earnest spirit of piety breathing its sweet odours over heart and home. Without a spiritually-minded minister, how can there be a spiritually-minded people?

These things Ada Martin brooded in her heart, breathing them in no human ear ; but surely, if earnest, unceasing prayers can avail, hers must be answered some day in peace. Mr. and Mrs. Matheson were quick to note the change in

their darling, but did not divine its cause. They concluded that she had been working too hard, and so petted and cherished and made much of her in their loving way, devising constant schemes for her pleasure and benefit. Riding, boating, driving—all the healthful exercise in which she had been expert before her marriage, were open to her again, and she took advantage of them to the full. She had come to rest and recruit, and she did it sensibly, being desirous of returning strong and well to her work.

Mr. Martin came and went to Gareloch. He went to Leipzig for ten days to visit a college companion, minister of the Scotch Church there, and then he ran backwards and forwards to Hightown to see what progress the workmen were making there; and so the brief holiday slipped away almost unawares, and the second week of September saw them domiciled in the manse again. Mr. Martin was very energetic. He personally superintended the work going on in the church, and by dint of urging and persuasion kept the contractors up to time. Gradually order began to rise out of chaos, beauty out of *debris*, and the restored church promised to be one of the finest interiors in Hightown. A space was left in the gallery for the organ, which was the minister's next ambition. Failing subscriptions in money, he had vague ideas of inducing the ladies to get up a



bazaar, the only objection to it being that it would entail so much work on his own wife. But then she was so willing, she never grudged work nor spared herself, especially in his interests, and she would be sure of substantial help from her mother and from the wealthy ladies of St. Mungo's, whose dainty fingers and spare hours in the drawing-room were chiefly devoted to making pretty trifles for bazaars and fancy fairs.

As the year wore on the work of restoration approached completion. The beauty of the interior was further enhanced by a handsome stained window, presented by Mr. Maitland in memory of his father, who had been connected with the Wellogate Church for fifty years previous to his death. Mr. Martin could not help the thought occurring to him that it might be a graceful act in David Buchanan to erect a similar tribute to *his* father, and present a companion window. But such a thought was very far indeed from the mind of the owner of Scotland Mills ; for he had more claims upon his purse than he well knew how to meet. By the third week in December the work was completed, and the church ready for occupation. So on Christmas Sabbath-day the inaugural services were held, and great crowds assembled in the morning to hear the celebrated Dr. Bellenden preach. They were disappointed in him, and many said he could not be compared to their own

minister. Truly, Dr. Bellenden's discourse was not adorned by any flowers of rhetoric, nor set off by much eloquent declamation. But it was an exposition of the Gospel pure and simple, spoken in humility and earnestness, as a dying man would speak to dying men. There were souls saved in the Wellogate Church that day—bright jewels set in the faithful servant's crown. Although he had climbed fame's proud pinnacle, and though all men spoke well of him, he was as humble as a little child, and clung to his first faith with all the love and reverence of his great soul. And because his prayer was "for Christ's sake," many souls were given him for his hire.





## CHAPTER XI.

### A BURDENED HEART.

**T**HE depression in trade continued and increased throughout the winter. "Bad times" was the universal cry, and money had not been so scarce in Hightown for many years. Some of the public works were almost at a standstill, and the operatives still retained were only on half-time, and lived in daily dread of receiving their dismissal. To add to the general depression, the weather was exceptionally severe. There was a heavy snow-storm in Christmas week, and from then until spring was well advanced, frost and snow, rain and east winds, succeeded each other alternately, until people began to lose hope and to fear that the seed time was to fail at last. Even thrifty folk, with something laid by for a rainy day, began to feel the pinch of hard times. As for the spend-thrift and the very poor, their condition was indeed pitiable. David Buchanan and others who went

on errands of mercy among them were sometimes heart-sick and appalled, feeling how utterly unable they were to cope with the prevailing distress. Relief committees were organised, soup kitchens and free breakfasts instituted ; but such measures were almost like a drop in the ocean, the effect of which was scarcely visible. In April, however, spring came in with balmy breath and healing wing ; the snow was swept from upland and lowland, the ice-bound brooks and ponds were released, blade and bud and leaf began to peep out ; it was like the advent of a new lease of life. Slowly, very slowly, things began to mend. Trade revived a little, and some of the unemployed were reinstalled at a reduction of wages, which they were only too thankful to accept. The fine weather lasted ; there never had been such a grand seed-time, farmers said, and the lost time was rapidly made up. So the drooping spirits of the people revived, and there was something like the old life and activity in the busy town once more. Both the minister and his wife had worked hard all winter. Mr. Martin had had his Bible class and his evening sermon every Sabbath day, and as he never went to the pulpit or the class-room unprepared, much of the week was necessarily taken up with study. His visits were confined to the sick or the afflicted, with an occasional evening spent at Maitland Park or in Gavin Dunlop's lodgings, to relieve the monotony

of work. Mrs. Martin laboured indefatigably as a member of relief committees, personally superintended the soup kitchen, and held her mothers' meetings and her kitchen prayer meetings regularly throughout the winter. These prayer meetings were the outcome of a new experiment, which the young wife had not yet had the courage to speak of to her husband. Yet they had been of much comfort to herself and to the hard-worked, broken-spirited wives and mothers, toiling almost hopelessly among their babies, and who never got to church. Strange as it may seem, the minister and his wife did not see very much of each other. He required undisturbed solitude for his studies; for, if the thread of thought were snapped, it was an infinite trouble to join it again, and proceed with the same ease and fluency. Ada, knowing that, was careful not to intrude, and she watched that no other should. The young wife's dream of a perfect union, of husband and wife walking as one along the path of life, one in heart and purpose, one in aim and work, was dispelled long ago. She lived her life apart; she had her work, her husband had his, and neither interfered with the other. Yet they loved each other dearly as of yore, though one element which had made that love so passing sweet was gone away out of Ada Martin's heart. The minister was fond and proud of his wife, but he did not feel her to be absolutely necessary to

his existence. He had a vague feeling at times that her clear eyes read too clearly his weaknesses and imperfections, and he knew that of many of his actions she did not altogether approve. Though she did not say so in words, his perception told him so, and thus by slow degrees he learned to keep many little things from her. Does that seem to you inconsistent, impossible indeed, in a husband who loves his wife? Ah, human nature has many sides! The longer I study it, the more I see of its contradictions, its weakness, and its mystery. I grant that Robert Martin's was not the highest type of love; he was too selfish a man as yet to enter that inner and most blessed recess—his nature required to be purified. Those who have suffered most love most I think, if their suffering be sanctified, not otherwise. The question of the organ was, of course, in abeyance. Robert Martin was too wise a man to bring censure on himself by moving in the matter so long as times were so bad.

But when things took a turn for the better he began to bestir himself in the matter. He met with opposition on all sides. Even Mr. Maitland cautioned delay. "People had no money," he said, "to spend on organs; it was as much as they could do to make ends meet." The minister had never broached the organ question to Mr. Buchanan. There had been a coolness between them since the

mill-owner had declined to subscribe to the restoration fund. Robert Martin chose to consider himself treated unjustly by David Buchanan, and remarked to more than one of the members that he hindered but did not help him in his work. There were some kind souls who deemed it their duty to repeat these foolish words to David Buchanan, from whom, however, they received scant courtesy. In his manner towards the minister there was no change. He was the same kind, calm, courteous gentleman, too high-souled to allow himself to be influenced by such trifles. For him life held many grave interests, which set the lesser ones aside.

It was surprising that a very hot summer succeeded the long bitter winter. Work was a burden, it was a labour even to breathe in the sultry air; and the eyes grew weary of seeing the lurid sky, which seemed always to promise the thunder which never came. There had been distress through cold in the town during winter; now there was a different kind to contend with in the shape of disease bred by the heat in the squalid places where the poor folk lived. There were a considerable number of fever cases in the Wellogate, and unless the heat abated these were likely to increase.

Hearing of it, the minister forbade his wife to continue her visitations among the poor, lest any harm might befall her. She promised to obey, and

for some days did not go without the garden gate. She felt languid and weary, as if the springs of her being were utterly exhausted. She was glad to sit in the pleasant shade of the limes, and idly watch the butterflies and the busy bees, the only living things which did not seem to feel the heat a burden. Her husband was anxious and solicitous about her, but she would not permit him to call the doctor, saying that it was only the heat which tired her, and that she would be better soon. She was leaning back in her low garden-chair one afternoon, with her pale hands loosely clasped on her lap and her eyes wandering listlessly, now to the burning sky and again to the parched and drooping flowers languishing for rain. She wore white, one of her last summer's gowns, which had fitted then like a glove, but which now hung loosely about her figure. But it was upon her face that there was the greatest change. It looked wearied and worn, like the face of one who had done fierce battle with sorrow and care. Her thoughts seemed to be sad, or it might be weakness and weariness which caused her eyes to fill with heavy tears, which chased each other slowly down her cheeks, and fell unheeded on the flower she had plucked but an hour ago, and which was withered now. Hearing her husband step on the gravel, she hastily brushed the drops away; but he saw them, and in a moment was kneeling by her side, with his arm thrown



tenderly about her. They were safe from observation, hidden by the branching drooping limes.

"My darling, what is it? What is vexing you?" he asked anxiously.

"Nothing, dear. I feel weak and weary, that is all," she answered hurriedly. "I cannot bear this heat; it takes all the strength out of me."

"There is something else, Ada. Tell me, do you feel ill?"

"Yes, I think I am going to be ill, Robert. I have felt like it for days; but I tried to keep up, thinking it would pass away."

"That was very wrong, my darling. It was not kindness to yourself or to me."

"No? I thought it was," she said, with a faint smile. "You have no idea how queer my head feels to-day. It is all confused. I do not seem to be able to retain a thought for more than a moment. I think I shall go in and lie down."

"You will go to bed at once," he said peremptorily, "and I'll send for Carnegie. You ought to have seen him long ago."

"I believe I should. Did you see papa in the garden a little ago? I thought he was standing over there, and that I could not go to him. I think that was what made me cry."

Robert Martin drew back a little, and looked at his wife with shocked and startled eyes.

"My darling, you forget; your father and

mother are in Switzerland, and could not possibly be here," he said with great gentleness. Then he lifted her in his strong arms and carried her into the house.

A message sent in hot haste brought Dr. Carnegie to the manse within the hour. He did not appear surprised at the summons.

"I half expected to be sent for. I have thought Mrs. Martin looking very unwell for some time, especially on Sunday," he said frankly to the minister.

"Why didn't you speak or come?" asked Robert Martin hotly. "You might have had the kindness and common-sense to do so much for me."

"Unfortunately, my hands are so full at present that I have not time to hunt up cases for myself. I have too many on my list as it is," responded the physician briefly. "I will see Mrs. Martin at once, if you please."

His examination was not prolonged, and when he came downstairs his face was very grave.

"Well?" queried Mr. Martin in agony.

"Have you a capable woman in the house who could act as a nurse for some weeks?" asked the doctor.

"Is my wife likely to be seriously ill for some time? Why don't you tell me at once what is the matter?"

"She has all the symptoms of typhoid fever, but

I will not say definitely that it is until I see her to-morrow. She goes about a great deal among the poor, I understand. Has she been doing so lately?"

"Not within the last week. I forbade it whenever I heard that there were fever cases in the town."

"A week! The disease takes that time frequently to develop itself. Your wife's system is much reduced, Mr. Martin. I think it my duty to tell you that if my fears concerning her are well grounded, she will have a hard struggle for life."





## CHAPTER XII.

### COALS OF FIRE.

THE patient was more or less delirious all night. Robert Martin watched alone by that sick-bed; what he endured can be understood only by those who have kept a like vigil. She talked of many things and many people, but her father's name was oftenest on her lips; and then a pathetic and tender smile would creep about the mouth, telling how dear were the associations that name recalled. She slept a little towards daybreak, and when the first grey streaks of dawn were creeping into the room she awoke again, and for the time the delirium was gone. "Are you there, Robert? Am I ill? Why are you sitting there? Have I been ill in bed a long time?" she asked in a feeble whisper. "Only since yesterday, my darling," answered her husband, with difficulty restraining his emotion. "Do you feel better now?"

She wearily shook her head.

"Oh, no, I am not well. Has the doctor been here? Does he think I shall not get better? Does he know what is the matter with me?"

"He could not tell until he saw you again to-day. He will be here early."

"Yes. Do you think I shall get better, Robert?"

"My dearest, what a question! Have pity on me, Ada; the very thought is agony to me."

"Well, you would miss me, but I think sometimes I should not mind. Life *does* seem so hard at times, and there is so much to do. We cannot wait till the work is all done, you know. Only God knows when that will be."

Robert Martin bowed his head on his hands, and groaned in anguish. Had he not thoughtlessly added to her burden often, until it had grown so heavy that she would gladly lay it down.

"Robert," she said presently in an almost inaudible whisper, for her strength was spent, "in case I should not be able to speak again, I want to ask you to be more devoted to your work than you have ever been. My dearest, what is the use of a fine church, with an organ, and all these things, unless souls are being saved in it every day? I have often wanted to say this to you, but my strength always failed me. You will not mind now when I am so ill, perhaps going away."

A deep groan was her only answer, wrung from

the depths of a man's heart awakened to keenest remorse and pain.

"Pray, pray every day, Robert, for strength and help. Go more among the poor and the outcast. Oh, they need all we can give or do for them!" she said, with tears welling in her eyes. "Show them the way of life; tell them the story of Jesus' love. Let them taste the blessing which is for them, only they don't know where to find it. Do all——"

The feeble voice died away, and she lay still a moment. Then the brief interval of consciousness passed away, and she wandered on again, now about some poor sick woman in Patience Lane, now about the green fields and the silver strand of the Gareloch.

Unable to bear it longer, Robert Martin left the room, and rousing the maids, despatched one at once for the doctor. He was at the manse before seven o'clock. The condition of the patient did not surprise him, and he at once pronounced it a bad case of typhoid fever.

"There is nothing to be done but to let it run its course, Mr. Martin," he said. "You had better have an experienced nurse at once. Shall I call at the Infirmary on my way home, and see whether they can spare one?"

"I will nurse her myself, Dr. Carnegie. I could not bear strange hands about her," was the minister's reply.

The physician shook his head.

"Absolutely impossible, sir. You are not equal to a month's continuous nursing, even though you had nothing else to do. Besides, in a case like Mrs. Martin's, the nursing is the most important thing. What sort of women are your servants? Will they be of any use, think you?"

"I don't think so. They have only been in the house since May, and my wife was very much dissatisfied with them."

"Ah, that's a pity, but I'll see about a nurse in the meantime. Good morning, Mr. Martin. I am in hopes that Mrs. Martin may weather this storm. She has youth and a good constitution on her side," he said, striving to cheer the minister a little, for he saw that he was much depressed.

When he was left alone, Robert Martin paced slowly up and down the study, marvelling at his own calmness. The doctor, a man eminently skilled in his profession, frankly told him his wife had only a *chance* of life. Only a chance! The probability was that the fragile frame would succumb in the fever's deadly grasp, and then—. He shuddered, and covering his face with his hands, walked with unsteady steps back to the sick-room. It was agony to him to be there, to listen to the ravings of the poor wandering brain, and yet he could not stay away.

A strange, desolate, disordered house was the Wellogate manse that summer morning, a house in

which the gentle, guiding spirit of its mistress was sorely missed. The maids, two senseless, careless, shallow-hearted girls, terrified for their own safety, now that they knew the nature of the disease, stood talking in the kitchen, wondering whether they would not be justified in quitting the house. By ten o'clock the Infirmary nurse—a trained and capable middle-aged woman, of swift, active, resolute movement, and of few but decisive words—arrived at the manse, and in less than half-an-hour her influence was felt in the house. She peremptorily ordered the girls to their work, made them prepare their master's breakfast, and then went upstairs and entered the sick-room. Her step was light and noiseless, her every movement swift but quiet, so that the solitary watcher was scarcely conscious of her presence until she spoke.

"I am the nurse, Mr. Martin," she said, in a voice which long practice had made very gentle. "If you please, I will relieve you now. I think your breakfast is waiting downstairs."

The minister rose to his feet and looked her all over. She was not a good-looking or even pleasant-featured person, but her eyes were kind, and she looked like one to be relied on. At sight of her a vague feeling of relief stole into his heart.

"I am glad to see you," he said courteously. "You see there is great need for your services here," glancing towards the bed. The nurse



nodded ; and looked about the room with a professional eye. The atmosphere was hot and stifling, and laden with the strong odour of vinegar with which the patient's head had been bathed.

"We want some air here, sir," she said, and stepping into the adjoining dressing-room she drew down the window ; then setting wide open the bedroom door, which opened on to the landing, caused a delicious current of pure air to play through the room. Satisfied then that she knew her business thoroughly, Robert Martin was content to leave the patient for a little in her care. He found his breakfast ready, but he did it poor justice. Then he wandered out into the open air, looked vaguely round the sunlit garden, went back again and up to the sick-room. The nurse met him on the threshold.

"Excuse me, sir, but I assure you it will be better for my patient if there is only one person in the room at a time ; and if I might be allowed a suggestion," she added respectfully, "I would advise you to go and lie down for a few hours, so that you may be fresh to relieve me by-and-by. Neither of these girls is to be trusted here."

"No, I thought not. Well, I think I will act upon your suggestion," he said, seeing the wisdom of it at once. Then with one yearning look at the flushed face on the pillow he went away downstairs, but sleep was out of the question. Remembering then that

it was Friday, and that his Sabbath work was only half prepared, he sat down to his desk only to find study equally out of the question. He could not concentrate his thoughts for a moment, they were a confused chaos circling round an awful and ever-present fear. Gradually the day wore on. Dr. Carnegie came again in the evening, and as the patient was visibly worse, the fever having considerably increased, he advised that the waving masses of golden brown hair should be cut off to cool the poor hot head. Robert Martin assented, and with his own hands took away the shining tresses with which he had so often played, she rambling and talking all the while quite unconscious of what was being done. How was he to live through the weary days which must elapse ere the fever ran its course, how bear the protracted agony of suspense when every moment already was like an hour of pain?

A message sent to Glasgow that night brought a promise of pulpit supply for the Sabbath day. Then Robert Martin tried to compose himself to write a letter to Gilbert Matheson. He dared not telegraph, for Mrs. Matheson was in delicate health and the shock might prove very injurious; and, after all, what good could either do though they were even now at the manse? Slowly the weary days dragged themselves away. Many came to ask for the beloved wife; her husband was

inexpressibly touched by the affectionate interest evinced by all classes. Now it would be an anxious member of the church, now an old man scarcely able to totter up to the gate, and again a little ragged child to whom her smile had been like a glimpse of heaven—all moved by a common love and sorrow.

One evening about a week after Mrs. Martin's seizure, the minister was out on some necessary parish work, and coming down the High Street met Mrs. Maitland. As was natural, he stopped to speak, and was astonished that in place of the usual warm hand-shake she only favoured him with a little bow, and drew herself away from him as far as possible.

"How is dear Mrs. Martin?" she asked nervously. "We are all so sorry for you, though of course it is impossible for us to come to the manse, but we are all so anxious and distressed. I had absolutely to threaten to lock Florence in her room, she was so bent upon going. I explained to her that it was mistaken kindness. It is such a dreadful fever, and so infectious. But surely she will recover. We cannot afford to lose our minister's wife, Mr. Martin."

"We can but hope for the best, Mrs. Maitland," said the minister briefly; and without another word passed on.

He was cut to the heart. It was a very little

thing, and the woman was perhaps perfectly justified in her action, but to him in his desolation and misery it seemed terribly needless and cruel. He was thirsting for sympathy, and had expected to receive it from one who had ever professed such violent affection for his wife and himself. The minister of Wellogate returned home in a very bitter frame of mind. When he entered the house the nurse came running downstairs looking much annoyed.

"The servants have both left the house, sir. Called a cab whenever you went out, and took their boxes with them. I've been expecting it, poor silly things; they're frightened out of their wits, and they have not a particle of feeling or good sense in them. We are better without them. Still, what are we to do?"

The minister made no answer. He turned upon his heel, entered the study, and shut the door. He sat down there, and looking blankly before him gave way to the sense of despair which stole over him. He felt himself deserted of God and man. Robert Martin was not fitted by nature or experience to face adversity; when it came it was like to overwhelm him. Sitting there in the dim silence he tried to think of God, to uplift his thoughts and desires to Him. He tried to pray; but in that hour of bitterest need he was made to feel that to him God was not that near Friend whose hand he

could touch in the gloom and be comforted. His agony brought him face to face with the husks of his own faith, and he knew that all along he had deceived himself, and that the truth was not in him. In a moment of time a flash of light seemed to shine in and make the mistaken, sinful past awfully plain. He had ministered to others even while he himself sorely needed healing. He had offered freely a gift which he had not accepted himself, of which he had never felt the need. He had taken the solemn vows of consecration upon him with a heart untouched by the love which alone could sanctify his work. One by one his broken vows, neglected opportunities, misspent time, selfish aims and selfish strivings, rose up to accuse him. He was still battling with conscience when darkness fell.

At last he prayed. I will not transcribe that prayer. It was for the ear of God alone.

When he rose from his knees the light of moon and stars, streaming through the open window, lay all about him, like rays of hope from heaven. He was conscious then of a stir of voices in the hall, and was wondering who could be in the house when the study door opened and some one came in. Then a voice, deep and manly, tremulous a little with agitation, fell upon his ears.

"How are you? My sister and I only heard yesterday of Mrs. Martin's illness, and we left

Strathpeffer at once to see if we could be of any use. We were so shocked to hear that you have none but strangers in the house that we made bold to come and offer our services. Believe me, Rachel is a famous nurse. She has gone straight up to Mrs. Martin."

Robert Martin looked strangely and incredulously into David Buchanan's true, honest, and earnest face, which seemed to be shining upon him in sympathy and love, then he sank into a chair and burst into tears.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### CLEARING UP.

**D**AVID BUCHANAN moved over to the window, and stood there in silence until the minister regained his composure. By-and-by he crossed the room, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the bowed figure said with a gentleness marvellous to see,

"I know just how you feel. I have heard how you have been left in your extremity, and yet I could not be greatly distressed, knowing God would not fail you and your precious wife in your hour of need."

Robert Martin rose to his feet, and stretched out his hand almost humbly.

"Will you forgive me? I have misjudged and wronged you. I am not worthy such generous kindness. Had you too held aloof it had been no more than I deserved or could expect," he said, and there was no mistaking the earnestness with which he spoke.

David Buchanan took the offered hand in his fervent grasp, and said, a little huskily,

"Say no more; say no more. We will understand each other by-and-by. I was to blame too. But now, tell me exactly how Mrs. Martin is; one hears so many conflicting reports outside."

"She is very low. Her strength is so much reduced to-day that she cannot combat the fever. She has lain in a semi-unconscious state for hours. Pray for me, Mr. Buchanan, that this cup may pass from me. I *cannot* give her up."

"God may not require it of you. She is very young. That is a great advantage; but it is well to be prepared, and, after all, the separation at the longest can only be for a little while. I can sympathise with you to the full, because she who was to have been my wife was taken from me before I had ever called her by that name," returned David Buchanan, his voice tremulous a little with the emotion caused by that unforgotten sorrow.

"Yes? I did not know—did not dream—that you had had any such experience," said the minister involuntarily.

"No. It does not do to proclaim one's sorrows on the housetops, and every life has its cross hidden or revealed. I just wish to tell you that the time came—though years after—when I could say truly,



'It is well.' Heaven is better than earth, and it was *her* gain."

"You were not resigned at first, then?"

A curious expression crossed the face of David Buchanan, and he shook his head.

"It was many a weary month before the words resignation or comfort were anything but a sound to me; nay, they were a mockery of my anguish; but that passed away. He *will* lift us from the deeps, take our feet from the miry clay and set them on a rock, if we will leave ourselves with Him; but that is just the hardest part of it all—we are so very human in our insatiable desire to have the why and the wherefore of everything; but He is very tender with us."

Robert Martin looked with wonder and awe upon the face of the man before him. How he had misjudged and misunderstood him, and what a great heart there was under the blunt exterior!

"You make me ashamed," he said bluntly; "you are so much nearer the kingdom than I."

"Nay, do not say so. You know nothing of my temptations and my falls. I have often to remind myself of the words, 'Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

There was a little silence between them then, and the minister began to walk slowly up and down the room as if in deep thought. He felt moved to tell this man before him of the conflict he had just

passed through, to acknowledge to him all the grievous error of the past.

"Mr. Buchanan, do you believe it a possible thing for a man to be deceived concerning his own salvation?" he asked suddenly.

"Most assuredly I do. Our hearts are so deceitful and our vanity so strong. I have known many who imagined themselves safe, simply because they were as good as their neighbours. On that plea they hope for and expect salvation."

"What would you think of the man who, without troubling himself concerning his own hope for the future, presumed to warn and direct others towards the way of life?"

"I am afraid that is not so uncommon as one might suppose," responded the mill-owner briefly.

"Do you believe that the preaching of such a one could be blessed?"

"I do not. I believe that there lies the secret of so many unfruitful ministries. The deadness which is abroad throughout our National Church could be partially traced to that cause," said David Buchanan candidly. "The Church is regarded as an honourable and desirable profession, and is often entered by men who have no special fitness for the work, and who have not the cause truly at heart."

Time was when Robert Martin would hotly and bitterly have resented these words, but he was

silent now, because the experience of that day had abundantly proved them true.

"I have been nearly two years in Wellogate, Mr. Buchanan, and so far as man can judge my ministry has been eminently successful. I don't suppose the membership was ever so large, or the church generally in a more satisfactory state," said he in a curious voice.

"You are quite right. You have worked a revolution here. None can deny it."

"Yes. But have I turned one soul to repentance? Have I been the means, by the grace of God, of showing to one seeking soul the way of life? I don't believe it. The reason is the one I have just mentioned: I myself, until this very hour, was a castaway. May God forgive me and give me strength to begin my life anew," he added in tones of deep emotion.

David Buchanan turned suddenly, and their two hands met.

"Amen!" he said solemnly. "*Now* your ministry will be blessed indeed. Thanks be to God for His mercy towards every one of us."

Both sat down then, and Robert Martin opened his heart to David Buchanan as he had never opened it to a living soul, his own wife not excepted. He did not spare himself nor lightly estimate his own shortcomings, and in the very telling there was an unspeakable relief. While

they were thus engaged, heedless of the flight of time, Rachel Buchanan's tender hands were busy about the patient upstairs, and it seemed as if comfort and healing followed them. The nurse was skilful and conscientious in the discharge of her duties, but love was lacking to make her ministry complete. The half-unconscious patient appeared to know the difference of look and touch and presence, and it almost seemed as if that slight figure with the kind, pitiful face and the gentle, loving hands brought a look of peace upon the worn, flushed face, which that trying week had so terribly changed.

The rich tones of the dining-room timepiece were chiming ten when the study door was opened, and the minister stole softly upstairs. The door of the sick chamber was a little ajar, and he could see the interior. Rachel Buchanan was standing by the bed, sponge in hand, gently bathing the sufferer's head. The expression on her face was something akin to that with which a mother might look upon a dear loved child. A slight movement at the door disturbed her, and setting down the bowl she stepped back from the bed to see who the intruder might be. Seeing the minister there, she smiled a little, and gave him her hand. He raised it to his lips.

"She has fallen asleep. Come and see her. She looks more like herself," she whispered, and

together they lightly stepped across the room. Yes, she was asleep; the breath was coming in regular respirations, and though the face was still deeply flushed, it looked more natural, and on the parted lips there lingered a faint smile, as if her dreams were pleasant. Fearing to utter a word, even a whisper, lest that blessed rest should be broken, they silently turned again and stepped out to the corridor.

"David? has he gone?" asked Miss Buchanan.

"Just going. And you?" said the minister, looking at her inquiringly. She had her cap on, and her soft house slippers, and had an apron tied about her dress.

"Oh, I shall stay if you will let me," she answered with her bright ready smile. "I came to stay. I assure you I am a famous nurse."

"God bless you!" fell low and fervently from Robert Martin's lips. "But for yourself, have you no fear? I am afraid for you."

"Fear! I have none. Am I not in our Father's hands just as much as *she* is," pointing towards the chamber door. "Let me whisper something to you and send you away. I have seen many cases of this fever, and I have the liveliest hope for Mrs. Martin. God knows we in Hightown cannot spare her; and I think He will hear the many earnest prayers which are being offered on her behalf."

"God bless you for these words of hope and

comfort. I can say no more," said the minister huskily, and went his way downstairs. David Buchanan was waiting, hat in hand, at the open hall door.

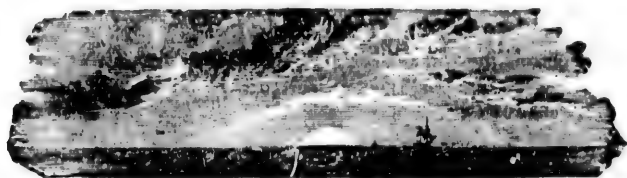
"How is Mrs. Martin now?" he asked.

"She is asleep," was the answer, and David Buchanan never forgot the look of intense thankfulness which accompanied the words.

"That is good. Tell Rachel I'll bid Martha pack her bag, and it will be along in the morning. Good-night, and God be with you."

"Good-night. May He reward you—I never can," responded Robert Martin in full earnest tones. So they parted, friends for life.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SILVER LINING.

**Y**ET another week of mingled anxiety, hope, and fear for the inmates of Wellogate manse, and then the dread waiting for the crisis, which has to be experienced to be understood. Dr. Carnegie expected the change at midnight on the twelfth day, and he arrived at the manse about ten o'clock, prepared to remain until it was over. It was his third visit that day, for he was deeply anxious about the patient, whose delirium and prostration had considerably increased. Rachel Buchanan and the nurse were in constant attendance in the sick-room. The former could not be persuaded to lie down nor take a rest, even though warned that she would be completely worn out. As for the minister himself, a strange deep calm had superseded the frenzied anxiety of the first few days; not, however, the calm of despair, but the quiet resting of a heart stayed in trust upon its God.

"Living or dying we are the Lord's," Robert Martin could truly say now, and so he was strengthened for the agonising suspense of these trying days. The physician remained downstairs with the minister, but few words passed between them. Robert Martin walked up and down the room incessantly, sometimes stepping out of the wide open window, and lifting his eyes as if in appeal to the starry sky. The heat was most oppressive. Every window in the house was open, but there was not a breath of wind to enter—not a sigh stirred the drooping branches of the limes. Even the pulses of health beat languidly in the still and heavy air. The whole earth seemed throbbing and panting for some blessed change, but the windows of heaven remained mercilessly shut.

"There is a cloud away to eastward. Do you think it will bring a shower?" queried the minister.

"I would fain hope so. We cannot stand this much longer," responded the physician.

"It is very oppressive. What o'clock is it now?" asked the minister.

"Five minutes past eleven. All seems quiet upstairs."

"What do you think will be the result?" inquired Robert Martin in a low voice.

"Only God knows. It would be wrong to hide my fears from you. Her system is fearfully



reduced. Everything which could be done has been done, and the suspense will be over soon."

"Should the result prove fatal, when will—?" Robert Martin said, but the question died upon his lips.

"Very soon. I think I will go upstairs now."

"May I come?"

"I think not. I will call you in ample time if—" The physician did not finish the sentence, but rose from the sofa and left the room. Robert Martin continued his restless walking, and as the minutes passed great beads of perspiration began to gather on his brow. The tension of that hour was like to overwhelm him. The gong chimed the half-hour after eleven, then the quarter to the hour. When its echo died away he stepped out into the hall, and, pausing at the foot of the stair, listened. There was no sound, not even a light footfall crossing the floor of the chamber overhead. That awful dread stillness was more than he could bear, and he took a step on the stair. Just then he heard the soft opening of the door and a light foot coming swiftly along the corridor. He flung up his head, expecting the messenger of death. Presently he saw Rachel Buchanan, her face shining, although it was wet with tears, and as in a dream these words fell upon his strained ears:

"God has heard our prayers. She has fallen

asleep as sweetly as a child, and the danger of the crisis is past."

Then she stole away again, guessing how it was with him. He would be alone in that supreme moment with his God.

They let him into the room at length to look at her, to witness for himself that sweet life-saving slumber. He dared not stoop to kiss her, or even touch the dear head with his yearning fingers, lest that priceless sleep should be disturbed. Fearing lest he should forget himself, Rachel Buchanan touched his arm and whispered that the doctor was going, and would he see him downstairs? Dr. Carnegie was standing waiting in the hall, hat in hand, his grave, somewhat stern face wearing an expression of lively satisfaction. In common with many, many others in the town, he had been deeply, earnestly solicitous for the recovery of the minister's wife. He knew, none better, that such as she could ill be spared from the world.

"You will be satisfied now, Mr. Martin," he said heartily. "It will only be a question of time and nursing now; and she has the best of attendants in that woman upstairs. God bless her."

"Ay; for what she has been and done for me and mine in this distress I can never be sufficiently grateful," replied Robert Martin huskily. "I thank

you, too, for your unremitting care and attention to my wife."

"Tut, tut; that is nothing. Wait till my bill comes in," laughed the physician cheerily; then he added in a graver tone, "It behoved us all to do what we could. Such a life was too precious to be allowed to slip away from us."

The minister wrung his hand, and, when he had let him out, went back to the quiet study. As he did so the thought flitted through his mind that were he prostrated or taken away, his people would not regard it as so great a loss. He knew it well, but he accepted that conviction in humility; for what had he done to win their confidence or love? when had he stepped aside from self or selfish interests to consider them? when had he sacrificed or inconvenienced himself for any one of them? The marvel to him was that they should have borne with him so long. He opened his desk to write a letter to his father-in-law, and the pen flew readily across the paper now, for joy and hope followed it, and breathed in every word he wrote. While he was thus engaged he heard some stray drops falling on the leaves, faster and faster, until the healing shower came down in a perfect torrent. He rose and, standing by the open window, listened to the happy sound, inhaling the delicious odours of the reviving plants, and feeling in his inmost soul the infinite goodness of God. He

might try for a little space, but never beyond endurance. Even the promise of the rain, though long withheld, was fulfilled in time to save.

Joy was as exciting in its way as pain; for though he threw himself on the couch, he could not sleep. So the dawning hours of that sweet summer morning were spent in earnest prayer, in fervent resolutions for the future, in humble consecration of himself to the work he had neglected so long. In the early morning the dear invalid awoke, very weak and spent, but her eyes looked round the room with the clear light of recognition in their depths. When they rested on the figure of Rachel Buchanan in the rocking-chair, with her hands folded on her lap, and the early sunbeams falling on her placid face and closed eyes, an expression of wondering surprise and pleasure came into the white face. Almost as if aware of the awakening, Rachel rose and stole softly to the bed. When she saw the open, shining eyes her own overflowed; and, bending down, she lightly kissed the white brow, and held up a warning finger to indicate that she must be still. She need not have been afraid—there was not sufficient strength in the feeble frame to give utterance to her thoughts. After swallowing, with some little difficulty, a few teaspoonfuls of nourishment, she closed her eyes again and fell asleep. That forenoon an unexpected visitor came to the manse,

asking to see the minister ; and when he went into the dining-room, what was his astonishment to see Florence Maitland ! Before he had time to utter a word, she began to speak with all her usual impetuosity.

"How is dear Mrs. Martin ? I would have been here long ago, Mr. Martin, but mamma wouldn't let me ; and for fear I should come, she took me away visiting with her to Moffat. We just came home last night, and I couldn't wait. Could I see her ? and, oh, will she get better ? I have just been miserable about her, I love her so !"

Robert Martin's heart warmed to the impulsive, affectionate girl, and he made haste to relieve her anxiety by assuring her that all danger was past. A sweet, bright smile shone through her tears when she heard the happy news.

"Oh ! I was sure that God would leave her with us ; she is so good and useful. Couldn't I get one little peep at her ; only just one, please ?"

"You could ; but what about Mrs. Maitland ? She would be much displeased, I fear, even at your coming here."

"Oh, she knows I am here ! Yes, mamma is dreadfully afraid of fevers ; but I have no fear, and as I will walk home, all infection will be blown away ; the air is so deliciously fresh and cool this morning after the rain."

"It is. It seems as if the evidences of God's love

and goodness crowded in upon us all at once," said the minister half musingly. "Well, I'll send Miss Buchanan to you, and leave you in her hands."

"Miss Buchanan! Rachel Buchanan! Is she here?"

"She has nursed my wife night and day for more than a week, Miss Florence," responded the minister in a curiously quiet voice.

"How good, how noble she is! and how selfish and mean and unkind we must seem in comparison!" exclaimed Florence. "How I envy her her privileges and her unselfish noble soul!"

"Ay, she is one of the few who follow literally in the footsteps of the Master, and who, like Him, is misjudged and misunderstood, especially by those who ought to know better. I have learned many lessons during this week, Miss Florence."

Florence Maitland was silent, for she had never heard the minister speak in such a strain. The truth was he was no great favourite of hers, and it was her habit to make fun of his airs and conceits, and to wonder how his wife could bear so patiently with his lofty and overbearing ways.

"I will go and see whether Miss Buchanan is disengaged," he said presently, and left the room. In a few minutes the door opened, and Rachel Buchanan entered. A warm greeting passed between the two, for though they did not meet often, the heart of each seemed to warm to the

other, and, had circumstances permitted, they would have been friends. By reason of her own youthfulness of heart and soul, Rachel Buchanan was dear to all young people.

"I never knew anything so perfectly splendid as your coming here to nurse dear Mrs. Martin, only you make me so dreadfully ashamed. Oh, Miss Buchanan, are you not glad that she is to get better?" she asked, with a tremor in her voice.

Rachel Buchanan nodded. Her heart was too full for words.

"I am not very good; I am afraid I am not a Christian, Miss Buchanan; but, oh! I did pray for her recovery. Her example has helped me to be a better girl than I have ever been; and she is such a true kind friend, I felt I would be desolate without her. Will you let me steal into the room and look at her?"

Rachel Buchanan shook her head. "That would be running a more serious risk than I should think wise. I would not be doing right to permit it, but as soon as she is able to bear talking I will tell her of your visit. It will make her very happy. I think she loves you; at least your name was often on her lips in the wanderings of the fever."

Bright drops stood in Florence Maitland's eyes, and for a little she did not speak.

"I never seemed to think anything about the reality of life until I saw her earnestness," she said

at length. "Do you know, though Mr. Martin is such a splendid preacher, I never seemed to get as much good from his sermons as from his wife. It is true what John Douglas says—she is a living lesson to us. She never spares herself, or thinks of herself at all, and she is so humble about herself. I never saw anything like it."

"Ay," said Rachel Buchanan dreamily, "'blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'"







## CHAPTER XV.

### FOR HIS GLORY.

**I**T was a lovely September evening, the hour that exquisite one between daylight and dusk. The sun had gone down, but a little of his sunset glory lingered still upon the earth. In the clear sky the stars were bright and many, and the harvest moon was at its full. In the drawing-room at the Wellogate manse the minister and his wife were alone. Ada Martin was convalescent now, but this was the first evening she had been permitted to leave the room where she had spent so many weary days. She was pale still, and thinner than of yore, and the short golden hair, beginning now to curl about her neck and on the broad, earnest brow, gave the sweet face a very innocent childish look; yet it was singularly becoming. There was a fire in the tiled grate, and a pleasant ruddy glow shone on all the pretty room, and touched tenderly the slender figure in the blue

dressing-gown lying on the couch half-way between the hearth and the western window, from which she had watched the sun go down. Her husband was sitting beside her, and there was an open book on his knee, no gem of modern literature, but the old, old Book, in which are found the lessons of life.

"Well, have you got a text, Robert?" his wife asked presently, turning her sweet eyes smilingly on his face.

"Yes."

"What is it? A rich one, I hope?"

He waited a moment, and then said slowly :

"A servant of Jesus Christ."

"You have preached from these words before. Don't you remember your induction sermon? Are you going to redeliver it?"

"No; I have written a new sermon. I was looking the old one over to-night, Ada, and before I had read many sentences I threw it into the fire."

Ada Martin started a little, not able to understand him.

"Why, dear, it was accounted a very fine discourse. You liked it yourself."

"Did you?"

"Some parts of it—the beginning more than the end. I never like the close of your sermons, Robert. Is that not strange?"

"I don't think so. The marvel to me is that

you like any part of them. Are you tired to-night, wife?"

"Tired after a two hours' nap in the afternoon! What a question! I feel so well—you have no idea—"

"Would it weary you to listen to my sermon?"

"No; I should like it of all things. It is so long since I heard you preach," she said pleasantly. "But where is Rachel? Couldn't she come too?"

"She has gone out, I think, dear," answered the minister, as he rose to light the reading lamp and bring the table on which it stood nearer to the couch. Rachel Buchanan was still an inmate of Wellogate manse, although the pressing need for her presence was now happily past. Her brother was absent in the States on business, and she had been persuaded to remain at the manse until his return, the time for which was now drawing very near. They did not know how they were to let her go. She had been mother, sister, and friend in one to the young wife, and had earned the lifelong gratitude and won the abiding love and reverence of both. Mr. and Mrs. Matheson were still abroad, and intended to winter at Cannes, the health of the latter still giving cause for anxiety. Whenever Mrs. Martin's physician permitted, she was to join them there; but in the meantime she was enjoying convalescence at home.

The minister drew the curtains close, shook up

his wife's pillows, and sat down close to her, with his manuscript in his hand, and in a few minutes she was held in thrall by the words he read. His voice was low and earnest, thrilled at times by the intensity of his own emotion. His listening wife never for a moment averted her eyes from his face, even when they filled with tears. Wonder, joy, contentment unspeakable succeeded each other in her heart and found expression on her sweet face. She could not tell how nor why, but it seemed to her that something she had always missed, and oh ! so often longed and prayed for, had come to her at last. The words to which she listened were not less eloquent, less beautifully expressed, than any which she had ever heard him utter before ; and they were more, they breathed a deep and humble piety, a clinging and unmistakable dependence upon the Lord, and, above and beyond all, they contained the simple essence of the Gospel story, setting forth clearly and unmistakably the narrow way of life, pointing to the strait gate as the only entrance to everlasting happiness and peace. When the last sentences, fraught with a passionate appeal, such sentences as a dying man might utter to dying men, died away in the stillness there was a long, deep silence. At length Robert Martin spoke in a low voice, shading his face with his hands :

"That is the first sermon I have written from

the heart. What an unutterable difference it makes when a man feels what he writes! May God forgive my barren and unworthy past!"

Ada Martin leaned forward a little, her face deeply flushed, and her trembling hand went forth and touched her husband's arm.

"Robert, in this trouble did God give you a nearer glimpse of Himself?" she asked in a voiceless whisper.

"The first glimpse of Himself I have ever experienced. Wife, my whole ministry hitherto has been a mockery and a self-deception. While preaching a form of Gospel truth to others, I was myself a castaway. Could any punishment be too great for such a one? and yet God in His unspeakable mercy has given pardon, peace, and joy, which encourage me to hope that I may yet do something for His glory. O Ada! when I look back, when I review the past two years, when I bring myself face to face with the self which has actuated every motive and aim, I am ready to sink with shame. I have made a god, an idol of myself; the marvel to me is that God should have borne with me so long."

Still Ada Martin spoke not, but sat with her face hidden, weeping tears of silent thankfulness and joy.

"It will be different now, my husband," she whispered at last. "Oh, thank God! it will be different now."

Robert Martin flung up his head, his face set in a high resolve, his eyes shining, his whole appearance that of a man who had awakened to the reality and the noblest purpose of life.

"Ay, with His help I shall go forward now, having no aim nor desire but to preach Christ and Him crucified. I have been an unprofitable servant too long, and richly do I deserve that servant's reward. Pray for me, Ada, that I may be kept from falling."

"His grace is sufficient for us," whispered the happy wife. "O Robert! my heart is overcharged! It is as if every wish I have, or have ever had, were fulfilled to the uttermost now."

"Did you know, did you guess anything of this, Ada?"

"I have feared it. I have missed something in your preaching. It did not speak to my heart. I was weighed down by dread lest the outward attributes of your position were becoming more engrossing than its inner and most sacred privileges. O Robert! I have had many weary sad hours thinking about it, but I did not lose hope, remembering always that with Him all things are possible."

"You will help me, Ada, you will; and when you see me going astray, or becoming lukewarm in His service, you will fearlessly warn me. I have now to learn of you, my wife; you have ever been

and are so much nearer the kingdom than I. I cannot but think that for your sake God has dealt very mercifully with me."

"Hush! oh, hush! We will help each other, and will God not go with and guide us both?" she whispered through happy tears. The last cloud was swept away from the sky now, the desire of her heart was granted to her; for when her husband's gifts were earnestly and humbly consecrated to the service of God, what great things might not be accomplished? What was to hinder the ingathering of many many wandering sheep to the fold?

In the deep and sacred silence which ensued the heart of each was filled with trembling yet joyful visions of the future. God seemed very near them in that home, and the solemn radiance of the harvest moon stole in at the western window, falling upon them like a benison from heaven.

Robert Martin is in Hightown still, and likely to remain. The desirable city charge which at one period of his life was the summit of his hopes has been offered him again and again, but has failed to tempt him. He says he has found his life-work. I would gladly tell something of what he has done and is doing for Wellogate Church and for the people of Hightown, but I know he would like me to stop here. Humility, that sweetest attribute of Christian character, has found a constant abiding

place in his heart, and though many marvel at the magnitude of his work, he takes no honour nor credit to himself. "By God's grace and for His glory" is the motto which crowns his life; and after all who can estimate the labours of a single-hearted, earnest servant of God—there is so little revealed to the human eye, so much hid with Christ in God? We will know it all some day. Till then, like Robert Martin himself, we are content to wait.

There are earthly homes which shadow forth what the heavenly will be. Such is the manse of Wellogate. There are a group of unselfish Christian children growing up about Robert and Ada Martin, consecrated to the Lord from their birth, and who will one day do good work in the vineyard for the Master whom they have been taught to love at their mother's knee. Many friends also are welcome in that happy home. Among the truest and dearest there comes very often an old white-haired man, whose tall figure is beginning to stoop sadly at the shoulders, and whom the children fondly speak of as Uncle David. David Buchanan loves to spend an hour at the manse, for his own home is desolate since his sister went home. The sweet mother has ever a warm welcome for him, for he is her own and her husband's friend, not for time alone, thank God! but for eternity.

John Douglas and his wife, now happily one in heart, are of the inner circle also, and so is Florence



Maitland, abiding still with her widowed father, whose irritable and trying temper is her daily cross. His worldly and selfish life held no preparation for the infirmity and pathos of age, and he is the prey of discontent and vain regrets. He is one of the very few who disapprove the change in the minister of Wellogate; it is a common saying with him that Martin is not the man he was, and that he has fallen short of the promise of his youth. Others have a different tale to tell. Many trembling lips crave a blessing on Robert Martin's head; in many hearts he is enshrined in love and reverence unspeakable. He labours not for the approval of his fellow-men, and the world's praise or blame affects him not at all. But his reward is none the less sure. What saith the Scriptures? "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

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**THE END.**

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